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# Smith College Studies in History

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JOHN SPENCER BASSETT  
SIDNEY BRADSHAW FAY  
*Editors*

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INFLUENCES TOWARD RADICALISM IN  
CONNECTICUT, 1754-1775

By EDITH ANNA BAILEY

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NORTHAMPTON, MASS.

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JOHN SPENCER BASSETT  
SIDNEY BRADSHAW FAY

EDITORS

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# Influences Toward Radicalism In Connecticut, 1754-1775

## CHAPTER I

### THE POLICY OF GREAT BRITAIN TOWARD THE EXPANSION OF CONNECTICUT

The formerly accepted traditions as to the causes of the American Revolution are no longer considered an adequate explanation of the spirit of revolt manifested so generally throughout the colonies. That a large number of isolated commonwealths, having no bond of union but that of a growing feeling of opposition to the common mother country, should unite in defence of an abstract principle of political justice, when only one of the number was suffering under really punitive measures, is not a tenable theory. Accordingly a search has been made for the underlying economic reasons that, added to the political principles that the colonists were upholding, gave real motive power to their spirit of opposition.

The importance of the merchant associations in the development of this feeling of opposition has been pointed out by Professor Schlesinger in his work, "The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution." He shows how, each time parliamentary acts were passed that resulted in diminishing the profits of the merchants, these men formed associations uniting the various colonies, so that they could offer a unified opposition, in this way bringing about the repeal of the acts in disfavor. This explains the economic motive of a large and influential class in many of the colonies.

In Connecticut, however, the merchant traders did not form a large percentage of the population. This colony had no Boston, Newport, or New York. Its very good harbor, New London, was used by a comparatively small town. The limited extent of this trade was commented upon by Ingersoll in a letter to the Commissioners of the Admiralty in 1761. "The afore-

said Colony," he wrote, "being a place of no very great Trade, a Court of Vice Admiralty have never been Erected there."<sup>1</sup> Governor Fitch also noted this condition in a letter to the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, in September, 1762.

The trades, works or manufacturers in the Colony are inconsiderable, the inhabitants being chiefly employed in subduing, fencing and improving the land.<sup>2</sup>

What trade there was in the colony was carried on by those living in a narrow strip along the coast and on each side of the Connecticut River, because the means of transportation in the inland districts was so poor. By 1750 all the land in Connecticut was occupied. Since there were no very large towns, the majority of the people in the colony "were almost entirely isolated from commercial relations with the outside world"<sup>3</sup> and could not, therefore, have felt the trade restrictions as an economic force toward rebellion against Great Britain.

The importance of land speculation in the Mississippi valley as an economic motive in the colonists' rebellion against the mother country has been pointed out by Professor Alvord in his work, "The Mississippi Valley in British Politics." Many companies were formed with the plan of getting large tracts of land, deeded by the crown under some form of quit rent. These lands were again to be sold in lots, according to various methods. The policy of the British administration regarding this planting of the Mississippi Valley was, however, vacillating. It finally terminated in the passage of the Quebec Act, an unrealized object of which was to exclude all further settlement between the Ohio and the Mississippi Rivers.<sup>4</sup> But speculation in lands so far distant had not very generally interested the people of Connecticut. In Phyneas Lyman and his "Military Adventurers," provincials drawn from all New England (whose scheme is

<sup>1</sup>Jared Ingersoll to Commissioners of the Admiralty, March 27, 1761, *Fitch Papers, II*. (Page references cannot be given as this volume is in the press and, therefore, accessible only in proof and manuscript.) Conn. Hist. Soc. Colls.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Fitch to Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, Sept. 7, 1762, *Public Records of the Colony of Conn.*, XI, p. 629.

<sup>3</sup>Bidwell, *Rural Economy in New England*, p. 305.

<sup>4</sup>Alvord, *Mississippi Valley in British Politics, II*, pp. 237-242.



included in Professor Alvord's discussion), we find their one exception to this rule. Thus Connecticut, whether through land speculation or through pioneers, had comparatively little to do with the Mississippi Valley emigration.

Though that far distant westward movement did not appeal to the people of Connecticut, they, nevertheless, had their land schemes. Their greatest land venture, that of the Susquehannah Company,<sup>5</sup> was most opposed by the British government during its first period of activity. This was before the time of the various western land schemes of which the "Mississippi Valley in British Politics" treats. This first period of activity of the Susquehannah Company the home government brought to a halt. A change in the personnel of the Connecticut administration, however, was the signal for starting the scheme again.

What this paper attempts to show is that the radical position taken by Connecticut in the Revolutionary movement, was mainly the result of British opposition to her efforts at expansion. There was not only the direct opposition of the home government, but an indirect opposition as well, for the British sympathizers within the colony persistently seconded the efforts of the home government. If it be true that this movement of expansion so greatly influenced the colony in its Revolutionary attitude, then there are three questions to be answered in regard to it before determining the effects of that opposition. The following are the three questions. What was the reason for the movement? If the Connecticut pioneers did not, at this time, seek the old Northwest, whither did their westward movement lead them? And, why did Great Britain oppose their emigration?

The reason for the movement of expansion was an economic one. The wilderness within Connecticut was entirely taken up, the line of frontier having advanced beyond the boundaries of the colony. The whole people, moreover, excepting only the small percentage that lived by commerce, was supported by the land. Although the professions and the trades were well repre-

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<sup>5</sup> In the name "Susquehannah Company" the spelling is that used by the members of the company.

sented, each man was, in addition, a farmer; often, perhaps even generally, the money received from the practice of the profession or trade was but an addendum to the real living, which was the profit of the farm.<sup>6</sup>

Dependent upon the land for a living as these people were, they were, nevertheless, very poor farmers. Because land had been exceedingly cheap, and was still cheap farther on, for those who had the spirit of adventure, they were not forced, in the effort to maintain existence, to adopt the more modern methods that had, in Europe, largely superseded the antiquated ones.<sup>7</sup> The majority of the people in the colony, who lived in the inland districts, produced on the farm practically all of the necessities of life. As the population increased, rather than improve the state of agriculture, the people moved on to where the virgin soil, cultivated by even the most antiquated methods, could easily support them.

The pioneers went mainly from those districts having poor transportation facilities. The counties and towns on the rivers and coast, where means of transportation to a market had proved a stimulus to production, and which, therefore, could maintain a larger population, lost far less by emigration than did the inland country.<sup>8</sup> It was, in consequence, the more markedly rural people, those who already held agrarian principles, who were the ones to go forward to found colonies of Connecticut, where their "towns were even more independent than their prototypes."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bidwell, p. 252.

<sup>7</sup> "The Philadelphia Society for promoting Agriculture have done themselves the honour to elect you an honorary member . . . .

The society wish to excite a spirit of inquiry & improvement in an art of such important and universal utility, and in which we fall so much behind the nations of Europe. One obvious cause of our inattention has been the vast quantity of *new* land, ready to receive a transfer of culture from old, worn-out field. But in the long-settled parts of these states there is no more room for such transfers, and modern European improvements demand our attention." Timothy Pickering to Oliver Wolcott, Sen., June 9, 1875, *Oliver Wolcott Sen. MSS.* IV: No. 54.

<sup>8</sup> Bidwell, p. 387.

<sup>9</sup> Johnston, *Connecticut a Study of Commonwealth Democracy*, p. 272.

Thus the demand of a rural people for more land drove them forward. Very early overflows had carried them into Long Island and the country about Newark. Later came the ill-starred scheme of Phyneas Lyman and his "Military Adventurers," in promoting which the neglected hero of the Battle of Lake George<sup>10</sup> spent eleven years in London. He returned in 1774 when, with his family and "many hundred families from Connecticut and Massachusetts," he went to West Florida, there to find after all his years of effort that all he had gained for himself and his provincials was squatter rights.<sup>11</sup>

Before the emigration of the Military Adventurers there had been the emigration into the "equivalent lands," the beginning of the northward movement, one of the three large pre-Revolutionary emigrations of Connecticut. This was a movement up the Connecticut into lands ceded by Massachusetts. Partly, perhaps, because this was the most natural direction for the expansion to take, this movement was the most powerful of the emigrations from Connecticut. The origin of "equivalent lands" was as follows. Early in the eighteenth century there had arisen a dispute between Massachusetts and Connecticut over their boundary line. Circumstances, including fear of losing her charter, "combined to urge the Colony of Connecticut to make peace direct with Massachusetts, and avoid the appeal" to the crown, arrangements for which both colonies had begun.<sup>12</sup> "By the agreement Massachusetts was as before to have jurisdiction over her old border towns, though they fell to the south of the new Colony line. For this privilege of jurisdiction Massachusetts agreed to compensate Connecticut. For as much territory as Massachusetts governed south of the true line, she agreed to give the same amount of territory to Connecticut in unimproved lands in Western Massachusetts."<sup>13</sup> These lands were called the equivalent lands.

Some of these lands, about sixty thousand acres, instead of

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>11</sup> Alvord, II, p. 176.

<sup>12</sup> Bowen, *Boundary Disputes of Connecticut*, p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

being in Massachusetts, proved, later, to be in New Hampshire, or rather, within what New Hampshire claimed as her western lands. New York also claimed this district under the grant of the Duke of York. In spite of these claims Governor Wentworth of New Hampshire "proceeded to make further grants of land in the disputed territory, very many of them to Connecticut settlers,"<sup>14</sup> and also to settlers from New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Soon after Lord Hillsborough was appointed President of the Board of Trade, he proceeded toward settling the matter.

He it was who when at the Board of Trade possessed with the worst Prejs. ag<sup>t</sup>. G.W. [Governor Wentworth] & his Grants, had without Notice to the Gov<sup>r</sup>. or Prop<sup>rs</sup>. Estab<sup>d</sup>. the Line at Connt. River & has been the occasion of all y<sup>r</sup>. Injuries & vexation.<sup>15</sup>

Thus wrote William Samuel Johnson, who was acting in London as agent of the New Hampshire proprietors. Governor Colden of New York having received this decision of the Board proceeded to warn off all settlers holding under the grants of Governor Wentworth. Accordingly, when Sir Henry Moore became governor of New York he found that district of his province in great confusion. Uncertain as to what lands were legally unowned and so capable of being granted to the petitioners for lands, he wrote the Board of Trade for advice.

In a letter which I received from G<sup>r</sup> Wentworth, he very strongly recommends the Settlers, who are established there; and concludes with saying: "the Grantees have already lost two Years Time, by an ill timed Procedure of G<sup>r</sup> Colden, by which some thousand Settlers have been driven off, and others deterred from making improvements." . . . I took every step in my power to quiet the Minds of the People there, as I understood, that a great uneasiness had prevailed among them, and made a Declaration to the principal Settlers there, which I desired might be made public, that every Person, who had really and bonâ fide settled and cultivated the Lands agreeable to the conditions of the Grants they had received, should be quieted in their Possessions; and no Grants would be issued by me to their Prejudice.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Johnston, p. 272.

<sup>15</sup> W. S. Johnson to Agar Tomlinson, March 17, 1768, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

<sup>16</sup> Sir Henry Moore to Board of Trade and Plantations, March 20, 1766, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

The patentees who had been frightened off from settling by Governor Colden's proclamation were not satisfied with this. With Lord Hillsborough as Secretary for the Colonies, however, they had little hope of any further consideration.<sup>17</sup> In the regulation that the Board of Trade finally drew up in regard to the lands, those patentees had received no more favor than this: they had "the Preference to any other upon applicat<sup>n</sup>. to the Gov<sup>r</sup>. of N York for New Gr<sup>ts</sup>. upon the usual Terms of Granting Lands in that Prov<sup>e</sup>."<sup>18</sup>

In these negotiations the proprietors or patentees felt that they had not received justice. Many of them had been soldiers in the late French and Indian War and these felt that Great Britain had been lacking in gratitude, withholding from them the lands that their efforts had made safe for occupation. Moreover, the system of local government that the settlers had taken with them from New England differed from that administered in the province of New York. The result was continued friction.

It was in the midst of this unsettled state, when law could not be administered according to any legal system, that in 1775 Ethan Allen wrote back to Oliver Wolcott, Sen., who had been sheriff of the country where Allen had lived in Connecticut, for advice as to some mode of government.

The Confused and Difficult Circumstances of the New Hampshire Settlements urge me to Request Your Honours Sentiments Respecting the Expediency and Policy of a Covenant Compact with Certain Resolutions &c . . .<sup>19</sup>

Finally Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys succeeded in winning the independence of their territory, which was formed into a state, in 1777, under the name of New Connecticut. Later this was changed to Vermont.<sup>20</sup> Thus the movement of emigration up the river from Connecticut resulted in the formation of a new commonwealth.

It was the economic motive, primarily, that drove the people of Connecticut to emigrate; but there was also a psychological

<sup>17</sup> W. S. Johnson to Tomlinson, May 6, 1769, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

<sup>18</sup> W. S. Johnson to Tomlinson, June 4, 1771, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

<sup>19</sup> Ethan Allen to Oliver Wolcott, Sen., March 1, 1775, *Ol. Wolcott Sen. MSS.* I: No. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Johnston, p. 273.



reason why they sought homes farther on. This is to be found in the particular characteristic of the Connecticut pioneer people that was largely instrumental in causing the clash between them and the other peoples among whom they settled, namely, their intense feeling of independence. This independence was also one of the causes of the opposition of the home government to the Connecticut people in their emigrations. William Samuel Johnson described this characteristic in a letter to Richard Jackson. Johnson had experienced great difficulty in finding a suitable tenant to work Jackson's farm and he told him the reason for his difficulty.

The truth is, as he suggests, that Land is so cheap in the Northern Parts of the Country that none but the most worthless of Mankind will stay below & labour upon the Lands of others. Our people have also ridiculous Idea that there is a certain Inferiority in being a Tenant unworthy the dignity of a freeborn Englishman. It absolutely piques their Pride & very few or none of any spirit will submit to be less than freeholders—I have no doubt both from what I have heard you often remark, & from my own observations that it wd. very often be much more benef<sup>e</sup>. to Tenants than to emigrate as they do continually & attempt to set up for themselves. But they have strong prejudices agt. it, & and are perhaps of so unconquerable a spirit of adventure & independence that they choose rather to put their fortunes in the wide wilderness exposed to all the hardships that unavoidably attend new settlements, or even stay here & cultivate in *Poverty* twenty poor acres of their *own* than grow rich upon Farms which they might have upon very easy terms, belonging to others.<sup>21</sup>

Then, too, the Connecticut people held their lands in fee simple and when they moved onward they did not change their form of land tenure. The province of New York, however, was divided into large estates and those who were the actual farmers were able only to lease the land. Johnston, in his "Connecticut, a Study of Commonwealth Democracy," says in referring to the towns in the district that had been newly made a part of the New York province, that "their 'independence and unbridled democracy' formed one of the arguments by which New York obtained a judgment in her favor from the home government."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> W. S. Johnson to Richard Jackson, May 30, 1772, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

<sup>22</sup> Johnston, p. 272.

A somewhat different aspect of the matter, and one that very materially colored the attitude of the members of the Board of Trade and Plantations, is shown in William Samuel Johnson's statement of Lord Hillsborough's "prejudice" against the New Hampshire grantees. Because of this prejudice, as Johnson wrote Agar Tomlinson, one of the grantees, they need hold no hope of a favorable consideration while Lord Hillsborough remained Secretary for the Colonies.

He will own indeed that the Bona fide Purchasers ought not to be Prejudiced but will hardly believe that there were many such, the whole affair having been Conceived by him to have been a land-Jobbing Scheme, Iniquitous Collusion between the late Gov<sup>r</sup> Wentworth and the Principal Patentees to raise Money upon the People without any real fair Intention of settling the Country—It is a very great Pity that any of the Prop<sup>rs</sup>. were discouraged by Gov<sup>r</sup>. Coldens Proc<sup>m</sup>. from settling, had they fulfilled the Terms of their Grants & been found in Actual Possess<sup>n</sup>., they would have been much safer, & I fancy would never have been removed, the injustice of it would have been too striking.<sup>23</sup>

Lord Hillsborough was not altogether wrong in thinking the affair a land-jobbing scheme. Speculation in land had been carried on for many years in the colonies. As wealth had grown the accumulating capital had found no outlet except in trade and commerce, since manufacturing was forbidden in the colonies. The result was that it was turned toward the buying of land. The method was for the colonial governments to sell townships to a few patentees who, in turn, became proprietors by reselling it in smaller lots to those who would be the actual settlers.<sup>24</sup> Following this method Governor Wentworth had the lands extending westward as far as the western boundary of Massachusetts surveyed and divided into forty-eight townships. In each of these townships lots were set aside for public purposes, such as for the benefit of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and, also in each, five hundred acres were reserved for him.<sup>25</sup>

In the last sentence of the foregoing letter Johnson expressed the key-note of the Connecticut method of carrying on expan-

<sup>23</sup> W. S. Johnson to Tomlinson, May 6, 1769, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

<sup>24</sup> Mathews, *Expansion of New England*, p. 91.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 112.

sion—the principle that possession is nine points of the law. Perhaps this trust in the right of possession was but the natural outgrowth of the disputed title that Connecticut held to a portion of her own soil. At this time the colony was divided into six counties; the disputed portion included two-thirds of two of these counties, the northern two-thirds of New London and the southern two-thirds of Windham.<sup>26</sup> The people, therefore, who lived in this large district of the colony held their lands without a clear title; this uncertainty, moreover, lasted for seventy years. In a later chapter the attitude toward emigration held by the people of this section is contrasted with that held by people living in other parts of the colony. The result seems to show that the long habit of resting their claim on the right of possession so influenced the judgment of this group of Connecticut people that they were ready to strike out into the wilderness, to take possession of new homesteads and let the matter of title be put aside for later consideration. It must be pointed out further, that not only were the individual titles kept in uncertainty but the title of the colony under which they claimed as well. Thus, composed as it was of individual judgments as to the necessity of having a clear title of ownership, the judgment of the whole "Company of the Colony of Connecticut" may have been affected by this matter of life-long existence under a disputed title.

The history of this disputed title, called the Mason or the Mohegan claim is briefly as follows. After the conquest of the Pequots, Uncas, a sachem who had fought on the side of the colonists, laid claim to the whole of the Indian territory. In 1640 the colony bought this land from him, leaving to him and the large group of Mohegans and conquered Pequots whom he represented, planting grounds and various communal rights in the land. In 1660 the colony commissioned Major John Mason, deputy-governor, to purchase the planting grounds also. These, together with the rights of jurisdiction, he acquired and surrendered to the colony. Although the Indians had thus given

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<sup>26</sup> Bowen, p. 25.



up all title to the land, they were still permitted to live on it as before, with Mason as manager of their planting grounds. But the form of the surrender to the colony of Mason's title had been faulty in some technicality. Thus it was possible for his heirs to claim that the transfer had been illegal. To strengthen their claim they tried to stir up dissatisfaction among the Indians. The colony attempted to quiet the Indians by a second purchase.<sup>27</sup> Finally the Mason heirs sought support from England and in 1705 the Privy Council directed that a commission should be granted to Dudley, instructing him to erect a court in Connecticut to do justice to the Indians.<sup>28</sup> This court decided *ex parte* in favor of the Masons. After this adverse decision the colony sent a statement of the case to its agent in London, Sir Henry Ashurst. On behalf of the colony he petitioned her majesty, Queen Anne, that the case might be tried before her. Accordingly she appointed a commission of review, which in 1743 decided in favor of the colony. The case was then appealed to the crown by the Mason heirs. A final decision was not given until 1773 when the Privy Council reaffirmed the decision of the commissioners of review.<sup>29</sup>

In this controversy, "money was advanced by the lords and noblemen to assist him [Mason] in the prosecution of his suit."<sup>30</sup> This was because of the sympathy that the members of the Privy Council had for the Indians, whose cause they felt the Masons were upholding. This brings out the third reason for the opposition of the British government to the expansion of Connecticut, namely, the desire to deal justly with the original inhabitants of the land. When there was a question of the Connecticut pioneers taking land that the Indians claimed as still their own, fear of unfair treatment of the Indians caused the government to object to the emigration of the people of the

<sup>27</sup> Trumbull, *History of Connecticut*, I, pp. 89, 196, 340 ff.

<sup>28</sup> Kimball, *Public Life of Joseph Dudley*, p. 146. The situation was complicated by the feeling of the colonists that Dudley was using this occasion as a means toward the annulling of the Connecticut charter.

<sup>29</sup> Dexter, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, note IX, p. 422.

<sup>30</sup> Trumbull, *A Plea in Vindication of the Connecticut Title to the Contested Land*, p. 92.

colony. When these pioneers, with their independence and insistence upon holding their lands in fee simple, moved among those who held their farms under lease from the proprietors, as they did in New York and Pennsylvania, thus causing trouble within the provinces, then the home government, as we have seen above, sided with the proprietors. The government objected to Connecticut land companies as speculation schemes, but the reason for this is too much a question of British politics to be considered here. It was certainly often the case that when there was a question of rivalry between schemes of the people of Connecticut and the people of other colonies, those others received the preference. The matter of justice to the Indian, however, formed the most important reason for the opposition by the home government to the expansion of Connecticut.

These, then, were the reasons for the opposition. The reasons for the expansion itself were both economic and psychological. In this chapter the great movement northward has been treated. The following chapter will sketch the early history of a Connecticut emigration which became so formidable, because of the hostility that it engendered, that there was, at one time, danger that it "might blow up a civil war."<sup>31</sup> This was the emigration of members of the Susquehannah Company. The causes were the same as those of the Vermont emigration; the opposition was of the same nature, but new circumstances entered in so that the result was not the same. Those who emigrated under the auspices of the Susquehannah Company did not form a new commonwealth.

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<sup>31</sup> Pelatiah Webster to W. S. Johnson, March 13, 1786, *Johnson MSS.* IV: No. 37.

## CHAPTER II

## THE SUSQUEHANNAH COMPANY

*First Period*

The reasons for the opposition of Great Britain to the expansionist movements of Connecticut have been shown. The expression of that opposition and its reaction upon the attitude of the colonists toward the home government came out most clearly in the history of the Susquehannah Company. Two periods only of the company's activity will be treated here. The first, from the memorial presented to the Connecticut assembly during its session in May, 1753, by a group of people mainly from Windham County, to the massacre of the settlers at Mill Creek, October 15, 1763, shows the opposition of the home government and closes with the total cessation of the activity of the company. The second period from the meeting of the Susquehannah Company, Dec. 28, 1768, when it was decided to retake possession of the Wyoming lands and settle thereon, to the adjourned session of the Connecticut assembly, January, 1774, shows the reaction of the colonists to that opposition and closes with the assertion by the assembly of the right of Connecticut to the disputed lands and the incorporation of them into the town of Westmoreland. The opposition of the British sympathizers began as soon as there was any question as to the approval of the home government to the operations of the company and culminated after the incorporation of Westmoreland, in that decisive year when a man's attitude toward the home government decided his position as Tory or patriot.

In giving the early history of the Susquehannah Company, the object is not to retell the story of the struggles of the pioneers sent out by that company, nor is it to offer an opinion in regard to the legality of the various claims. These pages attempt only to show the political significance of the affairs of the company. The first period begins with the growth of the corporation and the hopeful activity of the company.

The first public action of the group that later was organized into the Susquehannah Company, was the presentation of a memorial to the assembly during its May session in 1753. The subscribers of this memorial were "inhabitants of Farmington, Windham, Canterbury, Plainfield, Voluntown, and in several other towns all of Connecticut Colony."<sup>1</sup> Farmington is a town on the western side of the river; all of the other towns were in Windham County<sup>2</sup> on the east side of the river. Four of the memorialists—Capt. Jabez Fitch, Capt. Isaac Gallup, Ezekiel Peirce and Joseph Parke were members of the Assembly at that time."<sup>3</sup> From a comparison of a partial list<sup>4</sup> of civil officers of 1759 with Governor Fitch's list of civil officers of 1762,<sup>5</sup> we may judge that the four memorialists were representatives in the Lower House. In the government of Connecticut the Lower House served, in a way, as a preparatory school for the Upper House or Council. Two men were elected to the Lower House semi-annually from each town. After years of service there, if they had become prominent enough, they might be elected to the Council. The twelve councilmen, elected at large, were, in the main, members of a comparatively few prominent families, descendants of the early settlers.<sup>6</sup> Although they were elected annually, once in office, they usually remained for life. The governors had usually served as councilmen. Thus it may be inferred that the group was not of this closed body of the aristocracy, since their leaders were only four representatives.

The memorial presented to the assembly<sup>7</sup> tells of the land lying along the Susquehannah River, which the subscribers suppose is within the charter of the colony of Connecticut and upon which there are still no English inhabitants. The one

<sup>1</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barré*, I, p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 250.

<sup>4</sup> Chauncey Whittelsey to Ezra Stiles, Sept. 25, 1759, *Extracts from the Itineraries* . . . , p. 581.

<sup>5</sup> Governor Fitch to the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, Sept. 7, 1762, *Colonial Records of Conn.*, XI, p. 631.

<sup>6</sup> Bates, *Wolcott Papers*, Conn. Hist. Soc. Colls., XVI, p. xxv.

<sup>7</sup> Harvey, I, p. 248.

hundred subscribers wish to go there to live; because of this desire they ask permission of the assembly to buy the land from the Indians. They continue:

*Whereupon we humbly pray*, that the Honorable Assembly would grant to us a quit-claim of the aforesaid tract, or so much as the Honorable Assembly shall think best, upon such terms as your Honors shall think reasonable, and in such a way and manner that *in case we cannot hold and enjoy* the same by virtue of said grant, yet, notwithstanding the same not to be hurtful or prejudicial on any account to this Colony; and in case we can hold and possess said land, then to be always under the government and subject to the laws and discipline of this Colony—and provided that we, the said subscribers, shall within three years next coming lay the same out in equal proportion, and settle upon the same, as also purchase the right of natives as aforesaid . . . <sup>8</sup>

The request was made by reason of the fact that in Connecticut, since the act of May, 1717,<sup>9</sup> the mere purchase of land from the Indians did not give a clear title to it; "allowance or approbation" of the assembly had to be gained.

In the May session of the assembly in 1755 a second memorial upon the same subject<sup>10</sup> was presented. This petition was not from individuals but from the executive committee of the Susquehannah Company, for in the meantime an organized company had bought the desired land from the Six Nations through their representatives, eighteen of their chief sachems.<sup>11</sup> The purchase was made while the Indians were gathered at the Albany Congress in July, 1754.<sup>12</sup> It comprised a section of land about seventy miles<sup>13</sup> in length, north and south, two degrees longitude in width, and situated on both sides of the Susquehanna River. The purchase price was £2,000.

At this same time the Pennsylvania Proprietors purchased a much larger tract, which was vastly larger than the Indians realized or wished to sell, since the buyers dealt in terms of

<sup>8</sup> The published records of Connecticut do not state what disposition was made of the memorial. Harvey, I, p. 250.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, I. p. 247.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, I. p. 307.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, I. p. 271 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Professor Mathews, in *The Expansion of New England*, p. 119, states that the purchase was made in 1755 instead of 1754.

<sup>13</sup> Professor Mathews, p. 120, states that the tract was twenty miles from north to south, instead of seventy miles.

latitude and longitude. This helped to bring on trouble for both Pennsylvania and the Susquehanna Company, as shown later.

By the time of the presentation of the second memorial in May, 1775, the small group of one hundred, drawn mostly from Windham County, had increased to 850, including, moreover, many from outside the colony. The first memorialists had been desirous of settling the land of Wyoming on the Susquehanna. As their plans matured, more capital had been required; accordingly they had enlarged their group and organized it into a company. Thus their pioneer scheme had attracted many who had no idea whatever of moving out into the wilderness but who welcomed an opportunity for speculation. Consequently, those who belonged to the company at the time when the land was purchased (1754) and who, therefore, signed the deed, included within their approximate 750<sup>14</sup> many whose names were well known and highly respected in the colony. Among them were three councilmen, Hon. Hezekiah Huntington, Daniel Edwards, Esq., and Eliphalet Dyer, Esq.; two former councilmen, Roger Wolcott, Jr., Esq. and Phyneas Lyman, Esq.; George Wylls, Esq., Secretary of the colony; seventeen others with the title "esquire," then a mark of higher station; and many members of the Lower House, including Oliver Wolcott, later governor of the colony, and Doctor Benjamin Gale, prominent later in the opposition. The name of Ezra Stiles, who was then preaching in Rhode Island, later president of Yale College, also appears on this list. During the months between the purchase of the land and the presentation of the second memorial, the company was increased by about one hundred members. Probably Joseph Chew,<sup>15</sup> Jared Ingersoll,<sup>16</sup> and Colonel Jonathan Trumbull,<sup>17</sup> later governor of the colony, joined about this time.

<sup>14</sup> Harvey, I. p. 271 ff. List of signers.

<sup>15</sup> Chew was appointed on a committee July 27, 1762; Harvey, I. p. 402.

<sup>16</sup> "Now God knows I only came into it out of a mere Banter, supposing it was to cost me about five or six Dollars only, & tho I found the Expense much more I did not trouble my self, as you and many others who I new to be good Company were engaged & I expected we should have some Little Deversion for our Money." Chew to Ingersoll, June 17, 1763, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 282.

<sup>17</sup> Trumbull was appointed on a committee Feb. 25, 1761; Harvey, I, p. 293.



Another company, called the Connecticut Delaware Company, in which many of the members of the Susquehannah Company had also bought shares, was formed after the Susquehannah Company was organized and its plans well under way. The Delaware Company bought, with less regard for its method of procedure than the earlier company had shown, a large tract of land extending from the eastern line of the Susquehannah lands, as its western border, to the Delaware River. Although this company sent forth emigrations also, its later history is little known. Those who opposed the Susquehannah Company's operations treated that company as if it were affiliated with the Delaware Company. Many and influential as the members of these two companies undoubtedly were, their opponents greatly exaggerated their strength and influence.

By the time of their second memorial the Susquehannah Company had a more definite purpose than that of the original petitioners. What was now desired of the assembly was "their continuance and approbation of the erecting a new colony at Susquehanna, and of our application to his Majesty for that purpose . . ."<sup>18</sup> At the meeting of the company at that time they voted further,

That a seasonable address be made to His Majesty for royal grant and confirmation of a sufficient tract of land to said Company, and his approbation and encouragement of our undertaking; and to incorporate the said Company with a Charter of privileges, immunities and government *in form as near as may be of the Constitution of said Colony of Connecticut*. That in order thereto a proper address from the chiefs of the Six Nations of Indians to his Majesty be procured . . .<sup>19</sup>

There is a note appended to the minutes, in the handwriting of Samuel Gray, Clerk, which says that the affidavit was secured and sent to England. The affidavit closes with the following sentence:<sup>20</sup>

Neither do the deponents imagine any difficulty would have arisen about the sale and settlement had it not been stirred up among the Indians by the white people—principally among whom are the Governor of Penn. & Sir William Johnson.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Harvey, I, p. 306.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 306, 307.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 307.

The affidavit seems to show that the activity of the Susquehannah Company had caused difficulties, either directly or indirectly, among the Indians. The correspondence carried on between two Pennsylvania governors and two Connecticut governors, and between one of the latter and General Amherst, Sir William Johnson, and members of the home government, bears out such a supposition. In their correspondence the opposition of the home government to the activity of the Susquehannah Company is shown.

The reason for the first letters of protest on the part of Governor Hamilton of Pennsylvania was the presence of the "Journeying Committee"<sup>22</sup> in his province. This committee, appointed when the Susquehannah Company was organized, had for its duties

. . . to repair to said place at Susquehanna, in order to view said tract of land and to purchase of the nations there inhabiting their title and interest to said tract of land; and to survey, lay out, and receive proper deeds or conveyances of said land . . . <sup>23</sup>

The committee added to their stated duties that of enrolling new members along their way. Naturally such public business could not be carried on without its becoming generally known. Governor Hamilton learned of it through white people living near Wyoming.

The "Journeying Committee" started for Wyoming about the middle of October, 1753.<sup>24</sup> On March 4, 1754, Governor Hamilton sent copies of the same letter to Governor Wolcott and Deputy Governor Fitch. This letter, which was delivered by John Armstrong, Esq., a member of the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly, is dignified, courteous, and from the standpoint of the author, at least, generous. It tells<sup>25</sup> of the early rumors that the governor had heard, and of later partially contradictory

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 291 reprinted from Col. Franklin in *Plain Truth*, May 25, 1801.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 254.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 251, 252.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 254.

<sup>25</sup> Hamilton, to R. Wolcott, March 4, 1754, *Johnson MSS.* IV: No. 1.



ones, that there are Connecticut people who plan, "without the Countenance or Knowledge of the Government," to come to Pennsylvania in the coming spring and settle there under their Indian title; moreover, they do not expect "to pay any Regard to the Rights of our Proprietaries, or apply to this Government for their Leave and Authority." Although he can with difficulty credit these rumors, he feels it his duty to inform the Connecticut governor of them and entreat him to do his utmost to prevent the people from coming. If the people should come, in spite of the fact that the French have already invaded the province and there is danger of war, and should "forcibly take Possession of our Lands," then all would be justified in thinking them enemies who desire to bring on civil war. He urges further the danger from the displeasure of the Indians if settlers should come upon their favorite hunting grounds. He offers, if the Connecticut people wish to settle in the unappropriated lands in the western part of the province, or in Virginia, to use his influence in their behalf and to offer every encouragement.

The two men wrote their answers to this request on the same day, but their letters show an interesting contrast. That of the deputy governor is short and businesslike; it promises that the author will use his influence as desired;

I shall in all proper ways use my Interest to prevent everything that may tend any way to prejudice the general good of these Governments, and am inclined to believe this Wild Scheme of our People, will come to nothing, tho' I can't certainly say, I heartily desire a good Harmony may subsist between your Government and others, and this in particular . . . <sup>26</sup>

That of the governor, on the other hand, is rambling and indefinite; moreover, there is no word of his using his influence to cause the people to change their plans;

. . . some of our Inhabitants hearing of this Land at Susquehannah and that it was North of Grant made to Mr. Pen and that to Virginia and upon a designe of making a purchase of the Indians and hope to obtain a Grant of it from the Crown, this appearing to be a designe to promote His Majesty's Interest and render the Country more Defencible, we were all well wishers to it.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Fitch to James Hamilton, March 13, 1754, *Fitch Papers*, II Appendix, in *MS*.

But Mr. Armstrong informes me that this Land is Intirely within Mr. Pens Grant, if so I dont suppose our people had any purpose to quarrell with Pennsilvania. Indeed I dont know the mind of every Private man but I never heard our leading men express themselves so inclined.

Your proposal to move Mr. Pen & the Government of Virginia to promote new settlements in the easiest manner, if elected may turn the eyes of our people that way and it is but reasonable that Lands so far from the sea and on the frontiers should have the settlers on it encouraged in my opinion you may serve your King, your Proprietaries and your Country in promoting this Scheme and this may probably draw many of our people to settle in those parts which I hope will prove orderly and Industrious inhabitants and being used to war may be of good service on that Acct.

This seems to be a time if ever to promote as good a work and if omitted may prove our lost opportunity.

We in New England from our beginning have often had hard service with the French and Indians and Hitherto made our part Good with them: It is probable the war will extend in the Western parts and you must come to a clash with the French which shall be the Masters of the Country in Which Case every man will be servicable according to his strength of body & Resolution of mind. The Resolution of the soldiers will be very much in fighting for his Country according to his Interest in it and if I must go out Let me have an Army of freeholders or freeholders sons . . . .<sup>27</sup>

The remainder of the letter is but further emphasis of his idea of the expediency of having the freemen owners rather than leaseholders of the land.

Later in the year Thomas Fitch was governor of Connecticut and Robert Morris, governor of Pennsylvania. In a letter<sup>28</sup> to Governor Morris, Governor Fitch states even more conclusively than to Governor Hamilton his intention to do his utmost to prevent the further proceedings of the company.

The company, however, as has been shown, had already bought the land from the Indians. During the May session of 1755 it presented its first petition, as an organized company, to the assembly. The proceedings of the assembly<sup>29</sup> show that

Upon petition . . . of *The Susquchanna Company*, . . . representing that this Colony according to the express limits of its royal Charter is in extent from the Narragansett Bay on the east to the South Sea on the west, and from the sea-shore on the south to the line of the Massachusetts Province on the north . . . it was

<sup>27</sup> Roger Wolcott to James Hamilton, Mar. 13, 1754, *Wolcott Papers*. *Conn. Hist. Soc. Colls.*, XVI, p. 435.

<sup>28</sup> Fitch to Morris, Nov. 29, 1754, *Fitch Papers*, I, p. 71.

<sup>29</sup> Harvey, I, p. 307.

*Resolved by this Assembly*, That they are of opinion that the peaceably and orderly erecting and carrying on some new and well-regulated Colony or plantation on the lands above-said would greatly tend to fix and secure said Indian nations in allegiance to His Majesty and friendship with his subjects; and accordingly hereby manifest their ready acquiescence therein, if it should be His Majesty's royal pleasure to grant said lands to said petitioners, and thereon erect and settle a new Colony in such form and under such regulations as might be consistent with his royal wisdom; and also take leave humbly to recommend the said petitioners to his royal favors in the premises.

Thus Connecticut gave an official blessing to the project without assuming any responsibility whatever regarding the charter and the title to the land.

The next letter of expostulation from Pennsylvania was not written until February, 1761; the records of the Susquehannah Company, moreover, are totally devoid of information from the meeting of May 1755 until this date.<sup>30</sup> After the purchase had been made it had been impossible for the company to proceed with the matter of settlements on account of the hostility of the Indians. Ever angered at the loss of their lands, even at the hands of their own sachems, they resented the purchase of the Susquehannah Company as well as that of the Pennsylvania Proprietors. Emboldened by Braddock's defeat, the Delaware Indians had gone on the war-path against the Pennsylvania settlers. On account of the policy of inaction of the Pennsylvania Assembly, the people had been forced to leave the whole line of the frontier. Sir William Johnson, superintendent—and champion—of the Indians in the northern department, maintained that the Six Nations, though themselves actively taking the side of the English, still connived at the hostility of the Delawares, a tribe that the Iroquois had conquered.<sup>31</sup> This connivance was the result of the large land purchase of 1754.

At a conference held at Easton, Pennsylvania, in Oct., 1758, a treaty was enacted to which all the tribes of the Six Nations and various Delaware bands were party.<sup>32</sup> One of the causes

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

<sup>31</sup> Sir William Johnson to Lords of Trade and Plantations, Sept. 1756, Harvey, I, p. 323.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 379.

of trouble that was there disposed of was the Pennsylvania purchase, a part of which was re-conveyed to the Iroquois.<sup>33</sup> At about this time, also, a group of Christian Delawares were settled in a town, called Wyoming, where houses had been built for them at the expense of the Pennsylvania government. In the summer of 1757, when negotiations for peace were being made with this clan, which had taken sides actively for the French, its chief, Teedyuscung, had made the following request:

We intend to settle at Wyoming, and we want to have certain boundaries fixed between you and us, and a certain tract of land fixed which it shall not be lawful for us or our children ever to sell, nor for you or any of your children ever to buy.<sup>34</sup>

The governor had replied to this:

The Proprietaries have never granted away any lands, although within the limits of this Province, without first purchasing them of the Indians. And having never bought of them the lands between Shamokin and Wyoming they have, therefore, never laid claim to them under any Indian purchase; and in the name of the Proprietaries I now disclaim all such right. Of which I would have you take notice.<sup>35</sup>

When finally the Indians had settled down and peace and harmony seemed to prevail, the Connecticut Delaware Company sent settlers, in the fall of 1760, to take possession of the land they had purchased. Their deed was not from the clan of which Teedyuscung was chief, nor from the Iroquois, but from a tribe of the Delawares who lived farther north on the Delaware River. Upon hearing of this settlement the governor of Pennsylvania (Hamilton again held this office) sent a committee to investigate the matter; the committee's report<sup>36</sup> contained the following alarming statement:

It is strongly affirmed that every individual member of the Upper House, and the chief part of the Lower House, of the Assembly of Connecticut, are interested and concerned in said purchase. The Governor has not yet thought proper to suffer his name to be made use of, but his son is one of the proprietaries.

They had unwittingly identified the Delaware with the Susquehannah Company, greatly exaggerating what would have been

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 381.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 356, 357.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 357.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 391.



the strength of the combination. Probably not more than four of the councilmen were members of either company at that time, and certainly not nearly half of the Lower House belonged.

With this report in mind Governor Hamilton wrote again to Governor Fitch. This second letter was more peremptory in tone than the first. In the light of their former correspondence Governor Hamilton was surprised to learn that the project had been revived. The Delawares, having heard of the settlements, had sent their chiefs to him to say that, if the government would not remove those intruders, then the Indians would do so by force. Moreover, they desired that the settlers be told this, in order that they might not pretend ignorance. He said that he could not persuade himself that the settlers had the encouragement of the government, although they had maintained that they would stay where they were until the matter should be decided by the crown. Once more he requested Governor Fitch to use his influence with them in order to avoid "running the Risque of being cut off by the Indians, and involving us in a new War with them" or of putting him "to the disagreeable necessity of using legal Measures to remove them."<sup>37</sup> In reply to this letter Governor Fitch wrote<sup>38</sup> a careful analysis of the situation brought about by the presentation of the Susquehannah Company's memorial in 1755 and the attitude taken by the assembly, stating that the whole matter of the charter lay with the crown. Although the Connecticut government could not, in his opinion, intervene as Governor Hamilton desired, he promised to use his influence to avert the expected "ill consequences."

Governor Hamilton then appealed to General Amherst, who wrote, accordingly, to Governor Fitch. In his reply to this Fitch stated the same facts that he had related in his letter to Hamilton. "You will therefore See, Sir," he wrote, "there is no Dispute between the two Governments about those Lands ;

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<sup>37</sup> Hamilton to Fitch, Feb. 10, 1761, *Fitch Papers*, II (proof).

<sup>38</sup> Fitch to Hamilton, May 7, 1761, *Fitch Papers*, II (proof).

. . . as I am Sensible a Controversy with the Indians would be very Unhappy, I shall Endeavor all I can to Dissuade the people that Live in Connecticut from laying any foundation for such bad Consequences."<sup>39</sup>

Whatever the influence exerted within Connecticut to induce the two land companies to cease their activity, its was unavailing. The Susquehannah Company held a meeting in May, 1762, to "determine if possible to throw in Settlements upon the said Lands;" they accordingly "obtained Votes for above One Hundred Families who promise to proceed immediately and in defiance of Mr. Penn and his Emissaries to plant themselves down on the Lands."<sup>40</sup>

In July of that same year the company voted to increase to two hundred the number of settlers to be sent out. At the same meeting it was also voted:

. . . that Col. Eliphalet Dyer, Col. Eleazer Fitch and Joseph Chew to be a committee to wait on Sir William Johnson to lay before him the case of our Susquehanna Purchase, make application to him for what intelligence can be had from him relating to said affair, and if possible, gain his friendship and interest so far as is consistent with the general good.<sup>41</sup>

This shows that the members of the company could not have realized how deep seated was the feeling of Sir William Johnson against any intrusion on the rights of the Indians—or on what they considered their rights—nor how determined he was in his opposition to any such violation of their rights.

The committee seems not to have waited upon Sir William Johnson, but in March, 1763, Eliphalet Dyer and Timothy Woodbridge did so while he was holding a conference with some Mohawk and Seneca chiefs. Concerning this visit Sir William wrote the following in his diary:

The beforementioned gentlemen [Dyer and Woodbridge] then made me an offer to be a partner in ye land, and to send up the money to me, also the bullocks and pork, etc., that I might call ye Six Nations and give it them, provided they agreed to their proposal—all which I refused

<sup>39</sup> Fitch to Amherst, May 30, 1761, *Fitch Papers*, II (proof).

<sup>40</sup> Stephen Sayre's account of what he heard in Connecticut respecting the Susquehannah settlement, June, 1762, *Fitch Papers*, II (proof).

<sup>41</sup> Harvey, I, p. 402.



with ye slight it deserved, and gave them my opinion on the whole affair; and also told them the unhappy consequences that would in all probability follow should they (as they often hinted) form a settlement in these parts.<sup>42</sup>

How little Dyer and Woodbridge were persuaded by his arguments, Sir William related in a letter to General Amherst, who, in turn, wrote about it to Governor Fitch:<sup>43</sup>

Notwithstanding all the Arguments he made Use of to Diswade them from the Attempt, they Assured him that the Susquehannah Company, as they called them, were Determined to Settle Immediately on the land, to the Amount of a Thousand Families and Upwards whom they Judged Sufficient to Defend their Claim against any Opposition.

Before this meeting, either in January, or, more probably, some time in the latter part of 1762, Sir Wm. Johnson had reported to the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations concerning the complaints of the Delaware Indians.<sup>44</sup> These complaints had been

. . . against the Proprietors of Pennsylvania concerning certain lands of which those Indians deemed themselves to have been defrauded, and also . . . against several people of Connecticut who were coming to settle at Wyoming on the River Susquehannah, which had greatly alarmed the Jealousy of the Indians.

The dispute between the Proprietors of Pennsylvania and the Indians had, however, so he reported, been happily concluded.

The action taken by the home government was immediate. The Earl of Egremont, Secretary of State for the Northern Department, wrote the following to Governor Fitch:

After the Letter you wrote to Sir Jeffrey Amherst on the 30th May 1761, on the subject of some People from Connecticut, who were, under pretended Purchases, making Settlements in the Neighborhood of the Rivers Susquehannah and Delaware, which Settlements appeared to be contrary to the Inclination of the Indians, The King hoped that an effectual Stop would have been put to an Attempt, which threatens so much danger of an Indian War, as, by this Letter, you seem sensible that a controversy with the Indians would be very unhappy, and add, that you shall endeavour all you can to dissuade the People that live in Connecticut from laying any foundation for such bad Consequences.

His Majesty, however, having lately received Information, that the People, concerned in this Undertaking, persist in this Project of making

<sup>42</sup> Harvey, I, p. 411.

<sup>43</sup> Amherst to Fitch, Apr. 10, 1763, *Fitch Papers*, II (proof).

<sup>44</sup> Report of Committee of Council, *Fitch Papers*, II (proof).

the said Settlement, tho' the Indians did appear as much averse to it as ever; The King has commanded me to express to you His Surprise at this Behaviour, as well as His Displeasure to find, that Any of His Subjects in America, so little sensible of the Blessings of Peace, and of the Dangers from which They are but just secured, should persist in an Undertaking of this Nature, which may, in all probability, involve Them, and their Fellow Subjects, in all the Horrors and Calamities of an Indian War, just at the Time, that His Majesty has actually under consideration such precautions as may most effectually prevent so great an Evil; It is therefore the King's Pleasure, that you do exert every legal Authority over the People in your Government, and employ your utmost Influence to prevent the Prosecution of any such Settlement, till the State of the Case can be laid before the King, and the necessary Precautions taken to obviate any fresh Troubles in America, and you will use every means in your Power to withdraw from this Settlement any Persons actually there.<sup>45</sup>

The letter, however, was not sent directly to Governor Fitch but enclosed with a copy, in a letter to General Amherst, who was directed to forward it or not, according to his best judgment. The letter to General Amherst<sup>46</sup> brings out still more clearly the attitude of the home government toward the Indians;

. . . you will enforce the Orders therein contain'd by every Argument you can suggest to induce the People of that Colony to desist from any Undertaking of so much Danger, and you will employ every legal Means in your Power, for this purpose: The King trusts, that you will, at least, be able to prevail with the People concerned in this pretended Purchase, to suspend, for the present, the making the Settlement in Question, 'till you shall have reported to me, for the King's Information, a true State of this Matter; And you will accordingly make the necessary Inquiries into it, that His Majesty may be able to judge, what further Orders it may be expedient to give to prevent effectually any Hazard of an Indian War, His Maty having it much at heart to conciliate the Affection of the Indian Nations, by every act of strict Justice, and by affording them His Royal Protection from any Incroachment on the Lands they have reserved to themselves, for their Hunting Grounds, & for their own Support & Habitation: and I may inform You that a Plan for this desirable End, is actually under Consideration.

Sir William Johnson wrote not only to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations but to Governor Fitch as well. As soon as he received Governor Fitch's reply he wrote<sup>47</sup> to Governor Hamilton concerning his letter and its answer. Gov-

<sup>45</sup> Earl of Egremont to Fitch, Jan. 27, 1763, *Fitch Papers*, II (proof).

<sup>46</sup> Earl of Egremont to Gen. Amherst, Jan. 27, 1763, *Fitch Papers*, II (proof).

<sup>47</sup> Sir William Johnson to Gov. Hamilton, Apr. 30, 1763, *Penn. Archives*, IV, p. 103.



ernor Fitch, so Sir William wrote, had written "that he would take the first opportunity to lay the matter before the Assembly which would sit in May, & recommend these affairs to their serious consideration; doubting not but they would be disposed to take every proper measure that might come within their power to preserve a good Harmony & understanding with ye 6 Nations." Sir William told Hamilton of the letters that Sir Jeffrey [General] Amherst had received; speaking of the one from the Earl of Egremont to Governor Fitch he continued,

I am hopeful this will meet with all just deference, & that his Majesty's orders will be obeyed, altho' those concerned have been hitherto blind enough to slight the representations made then repeatedly from me.

The Inds of the whole Confederacy are now met in a General Meeting at Onondago, on acct of a message sent them by me, to which I have sent some of both Mohawk Castles to enforce my desire. As they are much alarmed at the proposed settlement, I dare say they will take the same into their serious consideration, with the result whereof I shall as soon as possible make you acquainted, as I have nothing more at heart than the preservation of peace, and the preventing any unjust encroachments to the prejudice of ye original owners, & the disadvantage of the Proprietaries of Pennsylvania.

His Majesty's orders were obeyed, for, during the May session of the assembly, 1763, the Susquehannah Company held a meeting and passed the requisite resolutions.

*And Whereas* (whether by representation mistaken or unfriendly may be uncertain) His Majesty has been induced to inhibit all entries on said land by any party or person soever, till due inquiry be made into the state of the matter, . . . we do thereupon *Vote*, That no Person belonging to the Company shall make any settlement, or enter upon, any of the Company's lands until the state of the case shall be laid before the King, and His Majesty's pleasure be known.<sup>48</sup>

Notwithstanding this official resolution, however, the members of the company did continue to go to Wyoming to settle. The previous year a number of men had made a beginning of cultivation at a place called Mill Creek, returning home to Connecticut for the winter. In the spring and summer various groups of them went back to Mill Creek with their families. Earlier in the spring a fire, the cause of which is unknown, had broken out in the village of Wyoming and burned several of

<sup>48</sup> Harvey, I, p. 415.

the houses that the Pennsylvania government had built there for the Delaware Indians. Teedyuscung, the chief who had so opposed the coming of the Connecticut settlers, "lying in a drunken stupor,"<sup>49</sup> had been burned to death in his house.

Before the May session of 1763 had adjourned, four representatives of the Six Nations, two Cayugas and two Senecas,<sup>50</sup> had come to Hartford to complain of the settlements even then being made on the Wyoming lands. These chiefs said that the Iroquois as a whole had never consented to the Susquehannah purchase. In answer to their complaints Governor Fitch said:

We assure and tell you this Government has not given any orders for any such settlement. We are no ways concerned in that matter, only as friends to you we have endeavored to prevent the people from going to settle those lands . . .

He told them further of the orders of the King and the resolutions of the company in obedience to them.<sup>51</sup>

Not even this concerted opposition was sufficient to balk the Susquehannah Company's dauntless agent, Colonel Dyer. Accompanied by other influential members he went to Albany in June, where he obtained from five Mohawk sachems a deed confirming the earlier deed the company had received on July 11, 1754. With this deed and an affidavit<sup>52</sup> he was then ready to go to London to petition the King for grant, according to his instructions as agent of the company.

But two forces, too strong even for the indomitable will of Colonel Dyer and his associates, soon put an end to all settlements by members of the Susquehannah Company. The first was the final decisive action of the Indians. A band of Delawares, under Captain Bull, the son of Teedyuscung, surprised and murdered, on October 15, 1763, the Susquehannah people, who were all gathered together in one settlement at Mill Creek. This was one of the incidents of the Pontiac War. The second was the decisive action of the home government. According to the

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<sup>49</sup> Harvey, I, p. 413.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 417.

<sup>51</sup> *New York Gazette*, July 18, 1763, Harvey, I, p. 416.

<sup>52</sup> See ch. ii, notes 19, 21 above.

order of the King in Council, the governors of Pennsylvania and Connecticut were each to appoint a commissioner and to instruct him.

. . . with all convenient speed to proceed . . . to the said Settlement at Wyoming and there to cause his Commission to be read and published with all due Solemnity, and immediately after Publication thereof to require and command the Inhabitants, in Our Name, forthwith to desist from this said Undertaking, and to depart and remove from thence within such limited time, as you, in your Discretion shall think necessary and reasonable.<sup>53</sup>

Late in 1762 the Pennsylvania Proprietors had presented their case to Attorney General Pratt. He had decided that after the king's commission had settled the boundary lines between Connecticut and New York, in 1664, Connecticut had "no right to resume the ancient boundary by overleaping New York and encroaching upon Penn's grant which was not made until after the Connecticut Boundary had been reduced by new confines."<sup>54</sup> It was upon this opinion that the King had based his orders.<sup>55</sup>

Governor Fitch acted at once upon receipt of the King's orders. There were then, however, no people to whom to make the proclamation. He therefore made the following report:

The Commissioner on the part of Connecticut set out in order to proceed to Wyoming and there duely and faithfully to execute the King's Commands and on his return reported to me that on his Journey he received Intelligence that the inhabitants at Wyoming which were but very few were cut off by the Indians and that the Settlement was wholly broke up, upwards of thirty Persons it was said were killed or captivated and but few escaped. But that he nevertheless proceeded to Philadelphia when he received from Lieut. Hamilton a full Confirmation of the unhappy Disaster of those poor and miserable People.<sup>56</sup>

Thus closed the first period of the company's activity. The attitude taken by the home government, mainly for the sake of the Indians and aided by the conduct of the Indians, had apparently stopped effectually the expansion of Connecticut into this part of the country.

<sup>53</sup> Proceedings of the King in Council, June 15, 1763, *Fitch Papers*, II (proof).

<sup>54</sup> ". . . taken from a Pamphlet some Time since published in Philadelphia said to be wrote by Dr. Smith." *Connecticut Courant*, Feb. 15, 1774.

<sup>55</sup> Harvey, I, p. 414.

<sup>56</sup> Fitch to Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, Nov. 10, 1763, *Fitch Papers*, II (proof).

## CHAPTER III

## THE SUSQUEHANNAH COMPANY

*Second Period*

The opposition shown by the home government to the desire of the Susquehanna Company for expansion brought about a corresponding opposition to Great Britain within the colony. The history of the second period of activity of the Company shows the development of that reaction. The presence of Colonel Dyer in London as agent for the Susquehanna and Delaware Companies, for they had voted to unite in an application to His Majesty, was the only evidence that the companies were still alive after the two heavy blows they had received in the fall of 1763. It was not a propitious time to petition for a charter, and anyone less sanguine than Dyer would probably have awaited a more favorable season. A friend of his, though an opposer of his mission, wrote concerning his going,

. . . from the Present very great disputes and unsettled State of the Ministry as well as the Indian Dispute believe he had better have waited a Little Longer.<sup>1</sup>

The author of the letter referred to the Pontiac War, which was going on at this time, and the dissatisfaction of the king with the Grenville ministry, which he was hoping to change to a "broad bottom" one. When Dyer reached London he was ready to listen to the advice of the agent of the colony, Richard Jackson, and consequently he did wait. The following year, having presented his petition to the king in Council,<sup>2</sup> he returned to Connecticut, leaving the matter of the land companies in the hands of a solicitor. Upon Dyer's return meetings of the Susquehanna Company were once more held; not, however, until December 28, 1768, was it formally decided again to undertake the settlement of the Wyoming lands. The history of the Delaware Company becomes obscure at about this point. The two companies seem, at some time, to have amalgamated.

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<sup>1</sup> Chew to Ingersoll, July 27, 1763, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 285.

<sup>2</sup> Harvey, I, p. 442.

During the time of waiting the members of the company had not been idle but had been carrying on propaganda to make the project of settlement on their lands a popular one. Dr. Benjamin Gale, who was later a violent opponent of the company, wrote to William Samuel Johnson about it as this time;

I observe you say Susquehanna petition still Lyes before K & Council. We have been amused with pompous advertisements just before proxis in Aprill & Sepr Annually.<sup>3</sup>

While the western lands were being talked of alluringly in newspaper advertisements, the company was deciding upon just how to go about getting the lands, notwithstanding the orders of the king; for whatever it should do, it wished to avoid the appearance of violating those orders. Again there came to the fore the reliance of the Connecticut colonist upon the right of possession. The company had appointed William Samuel Johnson, who was in London acting in the interest of the colony in the Mohegan case, as its agent there; Colonel Dyer, therefore, wrote to him freely in regard to the plans of the company;

. . . if the Decree of the King in Council—(obtained by Craft & Deceit) against our Settlement of the Susqh Lands under a notion that the Consequence would be an Indian Warr could be removed out of ye way or the reason of that Decree be looked upon at this time as not Existing so as it might not be esteemed Tumultuous Disobedient Contemptuous & to settle as being Contrary to His Majesty' Decree we should Immediately go on and settle and should not give our selves the Trouble of prosecuting our Petition any farther at present we do not doubt of our Claim & Title and as to Incorporation it would come of Course . . . the Substance (of the Decree) is that the Govr. be ordered to Signify to that Company that they do not proceed to settle upon those lands till the King's pleasure be further known therein now since that time a line has been ordered by the Board of Trade to be settled between the English & Indians beyond which the English are not to settle within which the Indians are not to Trouble or Molest any Settlers this line leaves our Susqh County or ye English side to Settle if they please, for we may presume that Decree had no relation or Intention to Serve Mr Penn but merely respected the Indians we want to have the matter of that Decree thoroughly discussed and if it stands in the say of our Settlement it must be removed if possible.<sup>4</sup>

The line to which Dyer referred was settled by the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in October of that year. At the same confer-

<sup>3</sup> Gale to W. S. Johnson, Dec. 1, 1767, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

<sup>4</sup> Dyer to W. S. Johnson, July 12, 1768, *Johnson MSS.* IV; No. 4.



ence, however, action was taken that brought into the situation a new element of complication. The agents of the Pennsylvania Proprietors bought the Wyoming lands from six sachems, one representing each tribe of the Six Nations. These lands included practically the whole territory that had been bought in July, 1754, from sachems representing the Iroquois, by the Susquehannah Company, two of the sachems who signed the later deed having, moreover, also signed the earlier one;<sup>5</sup> it included also the land that had been bought from a band of Delaware Indians by the Delaware Company. This territory was then divided into manors, small tracts of which were surveyed for the purpose of being leased, so that the land might immediately be occupied by those who would protect the interests of the Pennsylvania Proprietors.<sup>6</sup>

The Susquehannah Company realized that this action required an immediate counterstroke. In its advertisement announcing a meeting of the company on December 28, 1768, it accordingly spread broadcast the subterfuge that Dyer had described to Johnson, by means of which it might proceed while not appearing to violate the orders of the King:

*Whereas*, the lands formerly purchased by New England people and others (commonly called *The Susquehanna Company*) of the Six Nations of Indians, and lying on Susquehanna River, are within the grant made to the Governor and Company of the Colony of Connecticut, in the most plain and legal construction thereof; and His Majesty's prohibition as to the settling of those lands pointing out the dissatisfaction and disturbance that such settlement might occasion to those Indians as the only reason of such prohibition; and, as in consequence of His Majesty's order at the late congress at Fort Stanwix, such precautions have been taken as to obviate any fresh troubles with the Indians; and the Indians being now quieted and satisfied—it appears that nothing reasonable lies in the way against the Susquehanna purchasers going on and settling those lands, *purchased by them* (lying within the line settled with the Indians at said congress), as soon as conveniently may be . . .<sup>7</sup>

The meeting to decide upon the method of settlement was accordingly held. Joseph Trumbull, who had just returned from

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<sup>5</sup> Harvey, I, pp. 277 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 452, ff.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 462, 463.

London, wrote back to William Samuel Johnson concerning what was done at the meeting:

The Susquehannah Company had a meeting at Hartford last Week, & unanimously agreed to pursue the Settlements of those of their Lands which are Ceded to the English by the Indians in the late Treaty—Forty men of the Comp<sup>y</sup> are to go on & take Possession the Lands by the 1<sup>st</sup> of Febr<sup>y</sup> that they may get possession, if possible, before Mr. Penn—for their encouragement they are to have the first Choice of a Township to be equally divided among the Forty—as the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 200 more Heads of Family's are to go on, and have 4 Townships among them, the whole 240, to be afterwards equall shares, with the rest of the Proprietors in the Division of the Remaining Lands, They are all in high Spirits & no want of People to embrace the offered Encouragements for Settling, their ardour will rather want Restraining, than need any Prompting—Mr. Penn, in their opinion, is now all their obstacle, & that Point they think may as well be determined now as ever—As to matters of the Government, they judge it no favorable Time now, to apply on that Head, & a Government by Compact, or even Mr. Penn is better for a Country just beginning their Settlements, than any they can expect to obtain, in the present Situation of Affairs, & the Low Credit America is in, & the high Notions intertained of their right of Jurisdiction for the Colonies.<sup>8</sup>

These prospective settlers who were to further the claim of the Susquehannah Company through their right of possession, were under instructions "that they hold not the same or any part of said Purchase under pretence of any other claim but of said Company;"<sup>9</sup> moreover they had orders to behave quietly and peacably. Just how they hoped this possession would react to their advantage is explained in a letter from Dyer to Johnson:

. . . we are ready to Submit to any civil action or process where the Title and our Claim may be fairly Tried & to that purpose our possession is absolutely necessary as we on our part could not bring forward any action in that province without giving up one material part of our Defence which you will readily see . . . we have not the least Intention to hold those lands by force and if the Proprietaries will bring an action against our people in possession of Ejectment or any other civil process which will bring the Title into Question we are ready to answer thereto without the least force.<sup>10</sup>

The people were flocking from Connecticut to the Wyoming lands. The company was not just then pinning its faith to its

<sup>8</sup> Jos. Trumbull to W. S. Johnson, Jan. 15, 1769, *Johnson MSS. IV*; No. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Harvey, I, pp. 466.

<sup>10</sup> Dyer to W. S. Johnson, Aug. 8, 1769, *Johnson MSS. IV*; No. 7.

petition to the crown; what it desired to do was to force a civil action in Pennsylvania, for it felt itself on solid ground there. Governor Trumbull gave expression to this feeling of security: "Who had the right? Who first purchased title of the Indians? Who took the first possession?"<sup>11</sup>

The civil action that the Susquehannah Company so earnestly desired was, however, just as earnestly avoided by the Pennsylvania Proprietors. They were in great disfavor within their province, while the Connecticut title of fee simple had made the idea of holding under the Connecticut Company's claim a popular one with the farmers of Pennsylvania. Instead of a civil action the Proprietors brought criminal action against the settlers, greatly to the disgust of the Susquehannah people. The minutes of the Company give expression to this feeling:

*Whereas*, This Company are fully sensible of the equity and justice of their claims to the Susquehanna country, and of the rectitude of their intention in prosecuting their claims (which had been to gain possession of those lands *in order to lay a foundation for a legal trial and decision* of their cause); yet, instead of the Proprietors of Pennsylvania bringing forward or prosecuting any proper civil action in which the title to those lands might be set up and brought into question for a legal decision and determination; instead thereof have made divers attempts to drive us off by force (though under pretext of law process for riots and actions of a criminal nature) . . . .<sup>12</sup>

A petition of the Proprietors, Thomas and Richard Penn, to the Crown had not received the answer they desired. They were left to settle their own troubles, as the following report shows:

We are clearly of the opinion that the forcible intrusion alleged by the Proprietaries of Pennsylvania is a matter entirely within the jurisdiction of this Province, and that it would be both unnecessary and improper for His Majesty to interpose his authority in a case when there is not the least colour of a plea that the Charter of the Province of Pennsylvania does not contain the powers necessary to the decision of any suits which may be brought into the Courts there, in cases where the title of lands may be in question; nor that the state of the Province does not afford the means to support the execution of the laws, preserve the public peace and enforce the legal process of the magistrates and Courts of judicature.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Trumbull to Thomas Life, April 25, 1774, Harvey, II, p. 804.

<sup>12</sup> Harvey, II, p. 725.

<sup>13</sup> Report of Board of Trade, July 13, 1770, Harvey, II, p. 665.



In forwarding a copy of this report to the agents of the Proprietors, Henry Wilmot, their solicitor in London, wrote,

. . . and the dispute *not being between Colony and Colony* the Proprietaries left to get rid of these intruders as they can. The Proprietaries, therefore, must get rid of them as they can, *at any expense!* They are settled in Pennsylvania, and the laws of that Province must remove 'em!<sup>14</sup>

That the dispute might be taken up by the colony and be backed by its authority was just what was desired by the majority of the members of the Susquehannah Company, both the settlers in Wyoming and the influential men still in Connecticut, and what they were using every effort to accomplish. The settlers at Wilkes-Barre in Wyoming, as early as August, 1769, sent a memorial to the Connecticut Assembly petitioning that the colony assert its rights of jurisdiction over the new settlement. William Samuel Johnson, however, from his vantage point in London, judged that it would not be expedient for the colony to do so at that time. He, therefore, wrote to the governor the following letter upon the subject:

. . . I have a very good opinion of the legal right of the Colony to those Western lands, notwithstanding the settlement with New York, and know not how it could be avoided upon a fair trial at law. Those lands are plainly within the words of the charter and that settlement [New York] ought not to preclude the title to the remainder.

The opinion, however, that in general prevails here, founded upon some decisions of the Lords of the Council, is, that all the ancient charters and patents in the Colonies, being vague in their descriptions, drawn by persons often unacquainted with the geography of the country, and interfering frequently with each other, must be limited by the actual occupation, or other efficient claim, evidenced by overt acts of the early settlers; and since this is their notion of the matter, it seems plain that such claim would not be very highly favored here, and will probably give much offence if made by the Colony . . . with regard to the Susquehannah Company, for whose interests, as I have said, I am enough solicitous, it does not appear to me that a grant to them is at all necessary from the Colony, to enable them to defend against Mr. Penn. He must make out his own title, and recover in his own strength. They are in possession, and that

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<sup>14</sup> Henry Wilmont to agents of Proprietaries, Aug. 13, 1770, Harvey, II, p. 666.

possession is good against him, until he establishes a clear title, both under the Crown and from the Indians, which he can never do while it appears that the lands . . . were granted to the Colony of Connecticut in 1662 . . . I should think it perfectly right to give them a release of the Colony title, when the controversy is over; but to do it now, while the dispute is on foot, will . . . seem to be taking some part in the controversy; and it will then, I fear, be thought here to be no longer the controversy of the Company, but of the Colony, . . . the resentment will be against the Colony alone, and they, we know, may feel consequences which the Company cannot.<sup>15</sup>

The struggle between the Connecticut settlers and those whom the Pennsylvania Proprietors had hired to drive them away had been going on with the victory first on one side and then the other. In October, 1770, Captain Ogden had made a raid into the Wyoming lands, sent the principal settlers to Philadelphia, lodged the rank and file in the jail at Easton, and driven the women and children from the valley.<sup>16</sup> This was almost too discouraging for even stout-hearted Eliphalet Dyer. He felt that William Samuel Johnson had served the company a very ill turn in advising against the assertion, on the part of the colony, of its claim to the Susquehannah lands. The following letter expressed the bitterness of his feelings:

I hope our affairs are not desperate tho under a dark cloud for the present, all the misfortunes which have hapened have arose from the neglect of the Colony in the affair which if they had Countenansed in a proper manner no attempts of the kind I have mentioned would ever I presume to say have been upon our people . . . these proceedings of the Proprietaries agents we imagine to be Illegal & unconstitutional but how to relieve ourselves we know not so long as you disuade & Terrifye the Colony against making any Claim or Exercising their Jurisdiction over that Country if the Colony would once Extend their Jurisdiction there we should soon regain our possession there but untill something is done by the Colony it will be to no purpose for we shall Continually be exposed to the robberies of our adversaries & have our people at least some of them carried of & Confined in their Goals without relief as we can force no Action or Trial wherein we can put the Title in question fairly & take an appeal to the K in Council.<sup>17</sup>

The members of the Susquehannah Company felt that there was no hope of ultimate success for them unless the Connecticut

<sup>15</sup> W. S. Johnson to Jona. Trumbull, Feb. 26, 1770, *Trumbull Papers*, Mass. Hist. Soc. Colls. 5th Series, IX, p. 411 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Harvey, II, p. 684.

<sup>17</sup> Dyer to W. S. Johnson, Dec. 15, 1770, *Johnson MSS.* IV: No. 14.

government would recognize the Wyoming lands as part of the colony. While the settlers at Wyoming were fighting with the "pennamites" to keep possession of the land, the company members, back in Connecticut, were carrying on a political struggle with the object of gaining the support of the colony as the most effectual means of aiding their distressed brethren. There was another group of politicians, however, that was just as determined that the colony should not take over and support the claim of the Susquehannah Company.

A few years previous to this, while the company was still awaiting His Majesty's pleasure in regard to its petition for a Charter, there had occurred in Connecticut a violent and unprecedented political upheaval. As a result Governor Fitch and four of the councilmen failed of reëlection. Deputy governor Pitkin became governor in 1766, followed, upon his death in October, 1769, by Jonathan Trumbull. The Susquehannah Company then once more in May 1769 presented a memorial to the assembly. This time the petition was not for their Honors' permission for an application to His Majesty, but for a deed of Lease and Release, by the granting of which the assembly would have asserted the claim of the colony to the disputed lands. Although the councilmen who were members of the Susquehannah Company withdrew when the vote was taken, the Upper House, nevertheless, voted to grant the petition.<sup>18</sup> This action shows how the attitude of the council toward the Susquehannah Company had changed with the removal of the above mentioned few members. These men, still popular in their own communities, notwithstanding their loss of general favor, were elected to the Lower House, where they continued to exert a strong influence.<sup>19</sup> The Lower House voted repeatedly against the petition.

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<sup>18</sup> Dr. Benj. Gale to E. W., Esquire, Jul. 25, 1769, pamphlet.

<sup>19</sup> "Our Election you doubtless have been notified Terminated as the preceeding Year, The Superior Court nominated by the Upper House, came down, laid bye in the Lower House, who made a Nomination of their own, it was designed to make Choice of Gov<sup>r</sup> Fitch, & the 4 Excluded Councillors—Gov<sup>r</sup> Fitch was Chose in y<sup>e</sup> L [ower] H [ouse] by a majority of 10, but Coll Silliman having fallen under the Displeasure of his County

In the May session, in 1771, the assembly passed the following resolution:<sup>20</sup>

*Resolved*, That the lands west of the Delaware, and in latitude of that part of the Colony eastward of the Province of New York, are well contained within the boundaries and descriptions of the Charter granted by King Charles II in 1662.

Thus the company finally succeeded in winning the vote of the Lower House to an assertion of its claim to the western lands by appealing to the people before the assembly met in its May session. Petitions had been circulated throughout the colony, praying the assembly to incorporate the Wyoming lands into a county in order to relieve the distress of the settlers there. These petitions were to be signed by those who did not belong to the company.<sup>21</sup> This concession was, however, only a minor, although necessary, part of the desire on the part of the company. It did not succeed in getting the assembly to maintain that claim by incorporating those lands into a county of Connecticut.

During the October session of 1773 the assembly received from four of the most eminent attorneys in England<sup>22</sup> a favorable decision as to the claims of the colony, through its charter, to the western lands. Accordingly it sent a committee to treat with the governor of Pennsylvania as to some means of settling the dispute, or of applying to the Crown to appoint commissioners to decide it. At the January session of 1774, the committee reported that its mission had been unsuccessful;

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on Account of the County House, which is Burnt, he failed & Finally was settled as Usual . . .” Benj. Gale to W. S. Johnson, June 30, 1768, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

<sup>20</sup> Harvey, II, p. 684.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 683. According to an Article written by Roger Sherman and published in the Connecticut Journal, April 8, 1774, this was in 1770 instead of 1771.

“In May, 1770, in consequence of a memorial preferred by more than 4,000 of the freemen of the colony (none of them interested in the Susquehannah purchase), praying the assembly to assert and support the claim of this colony to the lands contained in our charter, lying west of the Delaware River . . .” Boutell, *Life of Roger Sherman*, p. 73.

<sup>22</sup> E. Thurlow, Attorney Gen.; Alex. Wedderburn, Solicitor Gen.; Rich. Jackson, agent for colony; J. Dunning.

thereupon the assembly passed the resolutions so desired by the Susquehannah Company and incorporated the Wyoming lands, including all the Connecticut settlements, into the town of Westmoreland, thus making the success of the company complete.

In 1763 the home government, aided by the circumstance of the Indian uprising, had stopped the movement of the Connecticut people westward. The agitation of the Susquehannah Company had continued, however, and, when those who had not been in sympathy with its aims had been removed from the Upper House, the company had then been able to push forward and take an even more radical stand than it had taken during the first period of its activity. Though it seemed as if the political triumph of the supporters of the company was at last complete, its opponents could still fight on and they took one last stand before the meeting of the assembly in its May session in 1774. This will be treated in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE CONTROVERSY WITHIN THE COLONY

The incorporation of the Wyoming lands into the town of Westmoreland, attached to the county of Litchfield, seemed a final and complete victory for the members of the Susquehannah Company. The opposition, which had been able to maintain a majority in the Lower House for so many years, though now a vanquished minority, had still the strength to rally its forces throughout the colony and make a determined stand by means of an extra-official procedure. An anonymous article, signed "Many,"<sup>1</sup> appeared in several of the colony newspapers some time in the latter part of February, 1774, and was printed on the front page of the *Connecticut Courant* on February 22. This was an announcement to the public of the desire, on the part of many who wished to "consult measures proper to be pursued to evade evils which we apprehend will attend present measures," that town meetings be called for the purpose of choosing representatives to meet at a convention to be held at Middletown on the last Wednesday of the following March.

Such a convention was without precedent in Connecticut. The members of the Susquehannah Company and others who, though not members, were in sympathy with its aim, were, therefore, astounded at this proposal. They were also fearful lest it should prove to be a successful measure, and their long fought-for victory be lost through an expression of popular disapproval at the coming election that would be held after the proposed convention. "Many's" article, moreover, made several rather serious accusations.

These accusations denounced the members of the company on the following grounds: first, "by *selling* rights to *some*, and *giving* to *others*, they had so increased their members, that the General Assembly could not procure a vote of the House to exclude the Members of the Susquehannah from *sitting* and *voting* in this very case in which they were *immediately* inter-

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<sup>1</sup>"Many," *Connecticut Courant*, Feb. 22, 1774.



ested;" second, having repeatedly said that the Colony should be put to no expense on account of the affairs of the company, they had, nevertheless, obtained a vote for the government to take upon itself the defense of its title to "those lands" and, accordingly, had "transmitted the *state of the case* to gentlemen learned in the law in *Great Britain*," for whose answer, of "less than twenty-five lines, the cost to the colony had been more than £100 *sterling*;" third, they had so taken up the time of the assembly with the business connected with their company that the colony had had to bear the expense of an adjourned meeting of the assembly, added to the expenses of the commissioners sent to negotiate with the governor of Pennsylvania; fourth, it was at the adjourned meeting toward the close of the session, when only sixty members were present, that the assembly incorporated the lands of the company into the town of Westmoreland; and lastly, not an assertion but an insinuation, they had misappropriated funds of the colony. The author stated, moreover, that the assertion of the Susquehannah Company, given in order to allay the fears of the taxpayers as to the cost of all this, that the sale of the western lands beyond those belonging to the company would bring the colony so much money that taxes would no longer be necessary, was an altogether false promise. The Company had claimed that if the colony would maintain its charter limit as the "South Sea," then the lands as far west as the Mississippi River, where the British domain now ended, would belong to the colony. It was a comparatively small portion of this vast tract that the Susquehannah and Delaware Companies had bought from the Indians. The writer of the article, however, maintained that, when the assembly ceded to the Susquehannah Company the right to those lands, the assembly had also ceded to Samuel Hazard of Philadelphia the lands lying between those of the company and the Mississippi.<sup>2</sup> The article closed with the announcement of the convention.

<sup>2</sup>The land ceded by the colony to Samuel Hazard had for its eastern boundary a line one hundred miles west of the western boundary of Pennsylvania. When he had but set his venture on foot, he died. Alvord, II, pp. 92, 93. Up to this time his heirs had done nothing further with his claim.

As might be expected, this article was followed by a storm of protest. The honor of the members of the company demanded that such accusations be refuted. Policy made the same demand, lest the coming convention have the excuse of the supposed dishonest action on the part of the officials of the colony as a basis for opposition to the official acts of the colony. The accusations were specifically refuted in articles in the *Connecticut Courant*, March 8, unsigned; the *Connecticut Gazette*, March 11, unsigned; and the *Connecticut Journal*, April 8, signed Roger Sherman.<sup>3</sup> They were also answered in a pamphlet by Ezra Stiles,<sup>4</sup> as well as in a series of articles by Benjamin Trumbull. The series appeared in at least two newspapers, the *Connecticut Courant* and the *Connecticut Gazette*, and was afterward reëdited and published in pamphlet form under the title of *A Plea in Vindication of the Connecticut Title to the Contested Lands*.

Not only were the accusations answered and the title of the colony vindicated, but the convention in turn was attacked as unprecedented, unnecessary, and illegal. Insulting and abusive articles were written by both sides, in which, however, no names were mentioned except that of Jared Ingersoll of the opposition. Against him the attacks were both many and virulent. From February until the election in May, the papers were full of the subject. The *Connecticut Courant* even printed supplements. The *Connecticut Gazette*, more partisan than the *Courant*, was almost equally monopolized by this question, although it gave space to only one innocent-appearing article by the opposition and held over for two weeks, after announcing its arrival, a letter that Ingersoll sent to several newspapers for publication. Doctor Gale, of the opposition, published a letter in pamphlet form; this was answered by a pamphlet signed "E.D.," of which Eliphalet Dyer was the reputed<sup>5</sup> author.

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Boutell, *Life of Roger Sherman*, pp. 73-79.

<sup>4</sup> The pamphlet was unsigned, but Harvey, in his *History of Wilkes Barré*, names Stiles as the author.

<sup>5</sup> Hoyt, *Brief of a Title in the Seventeen Townships in the County of Luzerne*, bibliography.

To this Doctor Gale replied, and in turn this second pamphlet by Doctor Gale was answered in a second one by Eliphalet Dyer. Dr. William Smith, Provost of the College of Pennsylvania, wrote a pamphlet on the side of the opposition; he was not a citizen of Connecticut, but much of the material that he used in his publication was furnished him by Ingersoll, a Connecticut citizen then living in Philadelphia. This was answered by Benjamin Trumbull's *Plea in Vindication of the Connecticut Title to the Contested Lands*.

By March 4 notices of town meetings began to appear in the newspapers. The *Connecticut Courant* of March 22 printed a notice signed "Many;" this notice suggested that, in spite of the protests made by members of the Susquehannah Company, there were many more towns that might have meetings and elect representatives to the convention, if there were more time in which to do so; "Many" had, therefore, postponed the meeting from the last Wednesday in March to April 1. The printer himself, who seems hitherto to have kept out of the quarrel, could not refrain from a squib upon the change to this particular date, in which he disclosed his suspicion that Ingersoll was "Many."

On the appointed April 1, the delegates, forty-five in number and representing twenty-three towns, met in convention at Middletown, the meeting being held behind closed doors.<sup>6</sup> Since the members differed as to the method of procedure upon the matter concerning which they had been called together, the convention broke up, after which some of the delegates held a second meeting, again behind closed doors. This more unified group made up slates for the coming election, varying them according to a certain plan; these they sent at once by messengers to various parts of the colony.<sup>7</sup> The following were two of the slates.

I Mathew Griswold, Governor  
William Samuel Johnson, Deputy Governor

<sup>6</sup> *The Alarm, Connecticut Courant*, April 5, 1774.

<sup>7</sup> "Colonist," *Connecticut Courant*, May 3, 1774. Reprinted from the *Connecticut Gazette*.

- Thomas Fitch  
 Ebenezer Silliman, &c, &c.  
 II Mathew Griswold, Governor  
 James A. Hillhouse, Deputy-Governor  
 Thomas Fitch  
 Ebenezer Silliman, &c, &c.

A third slate had Thomas Fitch for governor. The plan was this: by offering as candidates for governor and deputy governor, besides those officially nominated, the names of several who were popular with the other side, this group thought that the vote might be so divided that no one would be elected. If this should occur, the assembly would have to elect the governor. In this plan lay a chance for Fitch and his adherents.<sup>8</sup>

On April 5, after this preparation had been made, the contest that would take place at the election was announced by the following advertisement.<sup>9</sup>

A State Race, to be run for the Royal Plate on which the Arms of the Colony is engrav'd, by the young Horse Westmoreland, against the old Horse Charter, at Hartford on the second Thursday of May next . . .

The result of the contest left the interests of the Susquehannah Company still safe, for the election was carried according to the duly authorized list of nominees, and the governor, deputy governor, and councilmen were reelected. Benjamin Trumbull asserted that they were elected by "by far the greatest number of votes ever brought in for any governor or council in this colony."<sup>10</sup> The opposition had succeeded only in getting Jabez Hamlin elected on the council.

After the election there was published in the *Courant* another satire on the State Race, and a final advertisement.

This is to Notify all Persons indebted to me the Subscriber, for the Service of my Horse *Charter*, . . . to make speedy Payment, as it is expected he will soon be sent for to *Old England*, to compleat the Race with the Westmoreland, and through Infirmity of Body and ill Usage it is thought he will never return.

"CHARLES STEADY."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *A Creed, Connecticut Gazette*, April 8, 1774.

<sup>9</sup> Advertisement, *Connecticut Courant*, April 5, 1774.

<sup>10</sup> Trumbull, *A Plea in Vindication* . . . p. 101.

<sup>11</sup> *Connecticut Courant*, May 31, 1774.

The figures of the horse and of the arms of the colony used in the satire bear a striking resemblance to expressions used in two of Doctor Gale's letters.<sup>12</sup> These were written considerably before the satire appeared. Moreover, in his letters the language is in general highly colored by striking and individual figures, in decided contrast to the serious tone of the letters of his friends. It seems, therefore, probable that the Doctor was the author of the opposition satires as well as of the opposition pamphlets.

The satire was, apparently, the last expression of opposition, within the colony, to the assertion by Connecticut of a claim to the Wyoming lands. Accordingly, Connecticut continued to assert and to maintain its claim; the further struggle, however, was a matter between the governments of Pennsylvania and Connecticut, until after the decree of Trenton, when the controversy assumed yet another phase. After the election of May 12, 1774, the thoughts of the people were occupied by questions concerning methods of opposing the authority of Great Britain.

If it is true that the chief reason for the radical position taken by Connecticut, in the general opposition to Great Britain, was her desire for expansion, expansion being contrary to the policy of the home government, then those within the colony who opposed that expansion must have been conservatives, or sympathizers with Great Britain. It is necessary then to know who the opponents of that expansion were.

While the controversy of the spring of 1774 brought to light little that was new in regard to the membership of the Susquehannah Company, save perhaps the addition of the names

<sup>12</sup>"I think we are in a fine way, & riding Post Haste into the Rhode Island Method of Faction—Could the Freedom of our Elections be maintained our Charter Priviledges would be a great blessing, but otherwise, Loss of Charter would be Greater . . . when to the Colonies Arms, the Arms of the Susquehanna Comy are I trust to be added to yr Escution, when you shall return . . ." Gale to W. S. Johnson, June 10, 1767, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

"This has been Coll Dyers Hobby Horse by which he rose & as he has been unmerciful to Gov<sup>r</sup> Fitch & Yourself I never design to Give him rest untill I make his Hobby Horse throw him into the Dirt . . ." Gale to Ingersoll, Dec. 29, 1769, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, p. 428.

of two active sympathizers, Benjamin Trumbull and Roger Sherman, it did make some of the opponents known. Jared Ingersoll was to be found definitely allied with the opposition. His letter in vindication of his position was published in several of the papers of the colony. There appears to be, however, no obvious reason for assuming that he took the prominent part in the controversy that was generally ascribed to him, as shown by the acrimonious attacks against him. The pamphlets written by Doctor Gale are evidence that he took part in the controversy, whatever his relation to the satire on horse-racing elections. The names of the delegates from some of the towns to the Middletown convention were published in the papers, but that circumstance is not sufficient evidence of their belonging to the opposition, for some of them objected to the proposed measures and left the convention. The slates made up at the convention, however, give valuable information.

According to the explanation of the slates, Mathew Griswold, candidate for governor, and William Samuel Johnson and James A. Hillhouse, candidates for deputy governor, were put upon the slates in order to divide the votes cast for governor and deputy governor, for which positions Jonathan Trumbull and Mathew Griswold were the official nominees. Thomas Fitch, however, was the real candidate for governor of the group that made the slates. According to the way the names were given on the slates, Thomas Fitch, Ebenezer Silliman, &c., &c., it looks as if some definite group were meant. The names that had for years been associated politically with that of Thomas Fitch were Ebenezer Silliman, Jabez Hamlin, John Chester, and Benjamin Hall. These were probably the nominees of the opposition group. Moreover, expressions used in the controversial writings, such as: "with design to serve party purposes,"<sup>13</sup> "whose names are thus prostituted to serve a party,"<sup>14</sup> and "some people who have been disaffected to the present administration of government for near eight years past; . . . and

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<sup>13</sup> Stiles, *To a Candid Public*, see ch. iv, note 4 above.

<sup>14</sup> "Colonist," *Connecticut Courant*, May 3, 1774.



constantly endeavoring by misrepresentations to raise themselves to power and trust on the ruin of worthy and honest rulers,"<sup>15</sup> suggest that, in spite of the fact that there were no officially recognized party organizations within Connecticut, there were strongly marked political divisions. A survey of the later history of the colony shows the alignment along various political issues.

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<sup>15</sup> "Verax," *Connecticut Courant*, March 15, 1774.

## CHAPTER V

THE RELATION OF THE SUSQUEHANNAH COMPANY TO THE  
POLITICAL DIVISIONS

The first political issue to bring out a distinct lining up of forces in Connecticut was, in its beginning, religious rather than political. The reference is to the controversy within the established church. The "great revival," beginning in 1741, had meant the deepening of the religious lives of many of the people. Evil as well as good, however, had followed in its wake. Just as with the Quaker, in the early history of the colony, emotions excited by religious fervor led to extravagances of behavior, so too, at this time, excited feelings resulted in many excesses. Those who were naturally conservative were at first pleased with the religious awakening, but later they turned against the revival methods and all who used them. Since the church was an established one, religious affairs were also civil affairs. Accordingly it was not long before the assembly began to legislate against wandering revivalists. In 1742, it passed an act forbidding, under penalty, the entrance of one ordained minister into the parish of another, for the purpose of preaching, unless he came through the invitation of the resident minister and his church. The unlicensed preacher was liable to a greater penalty and the stranger might be sent as a vagrant from "constable to constable" out of the colony.<sup>1</sup>

More important than the legislation against preaching was the control exercised by the government over the churches. The parishes were established by law. When increased number of parishioners or extent of territory included within the parish gave cause for dividing it, permission for so doing had to be obtained from the assembly. Since the revival had changed the attitude of some people toward religion, members of the same churches could no longer worship together harmoniously. Accordingly, those who felt that they had experienced conversion wished to withdraw from the others and form a new church of their own.

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<sup>1</sup>Johnston, pp. 232, 233.

Since the adoption of the Saybrook platform, the churches were not only under the authority of the assembly but, to a degree also, under that of the convocation, that is, the group comprising all of the Congregational churches of the county. When the dissatisfied groups within the churches desired to withdraw, objections were raised for the reason that, on leaving, they would take with them their church taxes. As long as the conservative group remained in the majority it was able to control the convocation. With the assembly also on its side the "Old Light" faction was able to control the situation and keep the "New Lights" from leaving the old churches. Some of the parishes allowed the division; in others the struggle between the Old Lights and the New grew so intense that it became an important political issue. This was notably the case in Wallingford and New Haven.

In the Wallingford church the Old Lights were still in control; the New Lights, however, having become the majority in the convocation of which the church was a member, now considered themselves the orthodox group. In 1758 the church had called James Dana to be its pastor; the minority, questioning his orthodoxy, objected to him, and was supported in its objection by the convocation. Accordingly, the convocation forbade Doctor Dana's ordination; the church defiantly ordained him. The convocation retaliated by pronouncing the sentence of non-communication against the church and Doctor Dana, and acknowledged the minority group in the church to be the First Church at Wallingford.<sup>2</sup>

In the New Haven church the New Lights had finally grown to be the majority. They had been acknowledged a church by four ministers of the eastern half of the Fairfield County consociation. Notwithstanding this the assembly had not constituted them a separate church, and their church taxes had yet to be paid toward the support of the First Church and its pastor, Joseph Noyes. During the controversy Jared Ingersoll, Colonel Joseph Whiting, and Dr. John Hubbard had acted on different

<sup>2</sup> Bacon, *Thirteen Historical Discourses*, p. 267 ff.

committees representing the side of the Old Lights.<sup>3</sup> President Clap of Yale had been greatly opposed to the New Light party; later he began to think that Noyes, though no longer able to be very active in church work, objected to receiving a colleague. Realizing also that the college was losing favor with the public, Clap conceived the plan of asserting the right of the college to its own church. In the effort to gain this end he became the earnest opponent of Noyes.<sup>4</sup> Chauncey Whittelsey, who was finally appointed to assist Noyes, succeeded him as pastor of the New Haven First Church. A letter<sup>5</sup> from Whittelsey to Stiles, who was outside the controversy as pastor of a church in Rhode Island, shows how the action in regard to church matters taken by the assembly became a somewhat general issue throughout the colony and made the names, Old Light and New Light, descriptive of strongly marked political divisions:

You must know that Wallingford Minor Party, and indeed the Consociation—Gentlemen, were not at all pleased with the doings of the Assembly and especially the Disposition of the Upper House last May. I must also tell you, that the Supr Court in August last gave Judgment in Fav<sup>r</sup>. of Father Noyes, granting him for the last year's Salary and Wood, £130.0.0 Lawful Money at which Mr. Bird People were not a little disgusted. Whereupon New Haven and Wallingford Male Contents have united to attempt a mighty Change in Governm, and there are some pretty strong Suspicions that the Prest. [President Clap of Yale] with some of the Consociation Clergy were at ye Bottom of the Scheme. The Gentlemen to be dropt out of the Administration were the Gov<sup>r</sup>. and Mess. Newton, Silliman, Burr, Chester, Woolcot, Edwards and Hamlin;—instead of which were to be advanced Mess. Walker, Wooster, Ledyer, &c, &c, &c. Who was to be for Gov<sup>r</sup>. I think, was not fully agreed, as you know the Time for choosing Gov<sup>r</sup>. is not till Spring. To effect the Scheme, Nominations were drawn up and Emissaries sent out with them from Dan to Beer-sheba, to spread groundless Reports to the Prejudice of the Gov<sup>r</sup>. &c, and to stir up the Disaffected. But all to little or no purpose as far as we are yet able to judge. We hear from the various Parts of the Colony, that the Emissaries had been using their Influence in almost every Place; but this Scheme was rather despised than approved of by the Body and better part of the People as far as we have heard.

The New Lights were not powerful enough to bring about the desired change in the council; all of those to whom they

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>5</sup> Chauncey Whittelsey to Stiles, Sept. 25, 1759, Stiles, *Extracts*, . . . , p. 581.

were opposed, with the exception of Roger Wolcott, Jr., who died in October of that year, were reelected. The list of six whom they failed to put off the council included three, Silliman, Chester, and Hamlin, besides the governor, who were dropped upon another political issue in 1766. As to the other three: Newton was not reelected in 1762 (being seventy-six years of age he had, no doubt, resigned); Burr died in 1763; and Edwards died in 1765.

While the New Lights struggled to get control of the council an economic issue was emerging in the political field. The idea of expansion was becoming an absorbing one, especially in the inland districts of the colony. Before long three great emigration movements had taken many thousands of people to the frontier, away from the colony.<sup>6</sup> Not only those who went forward to found new homes in the wilderness were included in these ventures, but also influential men who remained in the colony were interested in them as means of speculation. One of these ventures, that of the Susquehannah Company, accordingly became later an important political issue. Preceding the attempted change in the council, in 1759, it had already passed through a few years of political history.

Before the Susquehannah Company made its purchase from the Indians in 1754, it sought the support of a favorable opinion from the governor of the colony. Roger Wolcott, then at the head of the administration, gave it most heartily in the following letter:<sup>7</sup>

I am of opinion a New plantation or plantation att the place design Will be much for his Majesties Service as it will Inlarge The English possessions of the Colony and advance our frontiers into it and being Settled with good and orderly people Will Much Strengthen and Encourage the English In North America against the Incroachments of the French, Who are Continually Errecting Their forts Nearer and Nearer to us & thereby driveing the Indians from his Majesties Alliance . . .

I therefore Wish them good success In That Undertaking and that they may never Want Incouragement from The Throne."

<sup>6</sup> "It is thought that not less than 30,000 souls have emigrated from this colony into other parts in about twelve or fourteen years past." Benj. Trumbull, *Connecticut Courant*, April 26, 1774.

<sup>7</sup> R. Wolcott to Sus. Co., January, 1754, *Wolcott Papers*, Conn. Hist. Soc. Colls., XVI, p. 428.

Wolcott may have thought that the settlement of the proposed plantation would do much for His Majesty's service. He did not, however, state that he thought His Majesty would be of the same opinion. When Governor Hamilton of Pennsylvania sent to the governor and deputy governor of Connecticut his first letter of protest against the proposed settlement of the Susquehannah Company on the Wyoming lands,<sup>8</sup> the replies sent back showed the characteristic attitudes taken by Wolcott and Fitch toward expansion. Wolcott had been a speculator in lands within the colony, before they had all been taken up.<sup>9</sup> Three of his sons were original members of the Susquehannah Company, and at least two of them were prominently identified with its activity. No advantage from his official position accrued to the company, however, for in 1754 he failed of reelection.<sup>10</sup>

The year 1754, in which Fitch began his administration, marked the beginning of an important period of colonial history, that of the French and Indian War. Governor Fitch had not only the management of the military affairs of the colony during this period, a matter which he carried through most ably, but there fell to his lot likewise the controversy over the claims of the Susquehannah Company. From the time that he wrote his first letter to Governor Hamilton upon the matter, which so contrasted with the one written by Wolcott, the position he took throughout was one of opposition to the activity of the company.

After the first burst of enthusiasm and growth that accompanied the formation of the company, there was a lull in its activity necessitated by the hostilities of the Indians. Long before the Treaty of Paris was signed, however, the Indians were again quiet upon the frontier, so that the settlers could

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<sup>8</sup> See ch. ii, note 25 above.

<sup>9</sup> Matthews, p. 92.

<sup>10</sup> His failure to be reelected had nothing to do with his stand in reference to the Susquehannah Company. It was because of a claim that he had not been sufficiently careful of goods taken from a disabled Spanish ship that had put into New London. Some of the goods were stolen and the matter for a time loomed somewhat large in diplomatic relations. His conduct was later vindicated.



return to their deserted homes and even advance farther into the wilderness. The return of interest in the Wyoming lands occasioned the revival of the correspondence upon the question. The reply<sup>11</sup> sent by Fitch to a second letter of protest by Hamilton shows not only his lack of personal interest in the matter but his determination that the colony should take no part whatever in the affair:

Whether the Assembly at that time had any apprehension those Lands were in the Limits of the Charter of Pennsylvania or not, I am not able to say, I suppose very few, if any, among us were acquainted with the particular description of the Bounds of that Charter; But whether such purchase and procedure interfered with any other Claim, the Assembly did not undertake to consider, as the motion was that they should by some Declaration signify that Connecticut would make no claim under the charter to this Colony, in opposition to their motion to the Crown, which the Assembly readily made; Thus Sir you see that the Assembly has been so far from making a Grant of those Lands that they rather disclaim them and leave those who have any Challenges by purchase, or former Grants, to conduct and manage as they think proper.

This Government, therefore, as such, have no concern in those affairs, nor have any inclination or disposition to interest itself in any dispute about those lands; and, altho' the purchasers may, Most of them, live in Connecticut, yet, as they act in a private Capacity, and even out of the Government, we can do nothing only by advice relative to their Conduct under another Jurisdiction. The impropriety, therefore, of this Government undertaking to prohibit people's purchasing Lands in the Limits of your proprietary's Claim, and in your Government or any other, save our own, must be very apparent, as every Government has the sole right to command, forbid, etc. in its own Jurisdiction, so has Pennsylvania in the present Case, if these things are within it; Nevertheless, as far as my influence will extend, I shall not fail in using it to prevent the ill consequences you mention; but if those purchasers should apply to the King, You will, doubtless, have a fair opportunity to oppose any motion they may make.

The following year Fitch even went so far as to state, in a letter<sup>12</sup> to the Board of Trade and Plantations, that "the Colony is bounded on . . . the west by the Province of New York which lines have been settled by agreements between the respective governments and royal confirmation." This statement of Fitch of the western limit of the territory of the colony, disclaiming as it did any right of Connecticut, under the terms

<sup>11</sup> Fitch to Hamilton, May 7, 1761, *Fitch Papers*, II (proof).

<sup>12</sup> Fitch to Board of Trade and Plantations, Sept. 7, 1762, *Public Records of Col. of Conn.*, XI, p. 688.

of its charter, to the lands as far west as the "South Sea," was used as an argument against the claim of Connecticut to the Wyoming lands by the opposition in 1774,<sup>13</sup> and also by the attorneys for Pennsylvania in the court held at Trenton, in 1782, to decide the case between the two states. Those who favored the claim of the colony answered this with the equivocal argument that the statement made by Fitch was not in reply to a question, "What are your boundaries?" but in reply to "What is the situation of the *Colony under your government?* What are the reputed boundaries?"<sup>14</sup> With the controversy over the Wyoming lands fresh in his mind, for in 1761 he had not only received the letter of protest from Governor Hamilton and carefully investigated the matter before replying, but he had also received and answered a letter upon the same subject from General Amherst, he could hardly have written without explanation, "the Colony is bounded on the west by the Province of New York," if he had wanted Connecticut to claim the western lands.

President Dwight, a contemporary of Fitch, characterized him as "probably the most learned lawyer who had ever been an inhabitant of the Colony."<sup>15</sup> Fitch's letters are throughout dignified, straightforward and courteous. It has also been said that he was less canny in his answers to the home government than were the other colonial governors. In consideration of his intelligence and his character and the fact that he himself was not a member of the Susquehanna Company, there is no reason for believing that he was not honest in writing the following letter<sup>16</sup> to Governor Morris of Pennsylvania:

Your favour of the 20th Instant by Mr Armstrong received Yesterday and should be glad it was in my Power to do more service that I am at present able to afford to prevent the Ill Consequences you have so well pointed out as proceeding from the Purchase of those lands on Susque-

<sup>13</sup> Benj. Trumbull, *A Plea*, etc., p. 62 ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64. The same argument was used later in the court at Trenton. "Mr. Jesse Root began, making use chiefly of Trumbull's Pamphlet as a brief . . ." Reed to Gen'l Bryan, Dec. 13, 1782, Hoyt, *Brief of a Title in the Seventeen Townships*, p. 42.

<sup>15</sup> Bates, *Fitch Papers*, I, p. xi.

<sup>16</sup> Fitch to Robert Hunter Morris, Nov. 29, 1754, *Fitch Papers*, I, p. 71.

hannah in the Manner in which some People of this Colony have presumed to Act. I am very sensible that to take any steps to disaffect the Indians in our Alliance or to raise Contests between the Governments at this Critical Conjunction must be prejudicial to his Majestys Interest and greatly Detrimental to the safety and Peace of these Governments; and therefore ought to be opposed by all. I preswade my self Sir that you believe I shall use what Influence and Interest I can against such Proceedings. Indeed I must confess myself to be unacquainted with the Scheme proposed by those Persons, and know but very little about the Steps they have taken as they never made any application to the Government about the matter and who the Persons concerned be or where they live I know not, but only in general I have been informed some live in this Government and I suppose the greatest Number, some in England, some, in New York the Jerseys and else where, when Gov<sup>r</sup> Wolcott made Publick Gov<sup>r</sup> Hamilton's Letter about this affair I imagined it would have discouraged the further proceedings in that matter but by what I have heard it had not in general that Effect, however I know of no better way with us at Present than to represent the State of the Case in some Public manner by which all Persons concerned may see the Consequences of such a procedure; and it will be needless for me to think what may be proper to be done in your Government in such Case. I shall therefore lay the matter before our Assembly for their Consideration and shall as I have opportunity Endeavor as far as lies in my Power to shew the Perril attending such transactions: if any thing worthy of Notice Occurs shall further advise you.

His confession of ignorance of the scheme might well be a truthful statement. In 1753 a group of comparatively unknown people, mostly from northeastern Connecticut, had petitioned the assembly for permission to buy land from the Indians and the affair had attracted the notice of several members of the council, and of representatives from other parts of the colony, as a means of speculation. A company had accordingly been organized and had bought the lands from the Indians, but this company had not yet presented any memorial to the assembly.<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>17</sup> The following expression of what seems to be the general opinion concerning Fitch's attitude in this manner is not borne out by the position he took from the beginning of the controversy to his death. "But officially the Connecticut government knew absolutely nothing of what nearly all its members and thousands of its citizens were embarked in; and though very solicitous to stop it in the general interest,—the home government was justly alarmed at the prospect of a civil war between two colonies in the midst of a foreign war of life and death to all of them—was quite unable for lack of information. The one reference to it in this volume is amusingly characteristic, Fitch's letter of Nov. 29, 1754: he does not know the parties to it or where they live, entirely reprobates it, and will try to have the Assembly (composed largely of its stockholders or the relatives or neighbors of the pioneers) intervene against it." *Fitch Papers*, I, p. xxxi, article by Forrest Morgan.

fact of his son's having been one of the original members of the company does not alter the situation, for a grown son might easily, even in that day, have bought membership by the purchase of one two-dollar share in a scheme of speculation, without the knowledge of his father.<sup>18</sup>

It was during the first period of activity of the Susquehannah Company, when the home government showed itself so determinedly opposed to schemes of the company, that there came a change in the attitude of some of its members. At this time Jared Ingersoll was the colony's agent in London. When he went over in 1758, one of the prominent members of the company, Daniel Edwards, asked him to find out what he could as to the opinions of those in the administration and of others of importance concerning the wisdom of the actions of the company and the probability of its success in its undertaking. When in 1761 Ingersoll returned to Connecticut, Richard Jackson of London having in the meantime been appointed agent of the colony in his stead, he sent a full report of what he had learned to the company, which was so little in its favor that he felt it his duty to advise the company to abandon its scheme. Some of the members suspected him of having been bribed by Penn to make such a report,<sup>19</sup> and the consequent result was a feeling of bitterness engendered against him by these members. Later circumstances combined with this to make the name of Ingersoll a byword in certain parts of the colony. Nevertheless, in spite of the distrust of some there were others who were influenced by his opinion, together with that of General Amherst and of Sir William Johnson, and who lost interest in the success of the company, or even became opposed to its asserting and maintaining its claims.

One of those who early joined the Susquehannah Company and later withdrew his allegiance was Joseph Chew. He had taken a somewhat active part in the company, but, convinced of either the fraudulency or the inexpediency of the company's

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<sup>18</sup> See ch. ii, note 36 above.

<sup>19</sup> Ingersoll, *Connecticut Courant*, March 22, 1774.

schemes, he tried, as quickly as might be, and with as little friction as possible, to disassociate himself from its activity and free his name from any connection with that of the company. While he was feeling thus disinclined toward it, the company, not realizing his apostasy, desired him to use his influence in the interest of the company, with William Franklin, Governor of New Jersey. Chew felt the absurdity of their expecting Franklin's support, for, as he wrote to Ingersoll, "Mr. Franklin will on no Terms interfer in any matter disagreeable to the Ministry—this is Reasonable to imagine."<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Chew felt that in order to keep his own position he must not act at variance with the expressed policy of the home government.<sup>21</sup> Franklin was, perhaps, influenced by the same reasoning, having "too much good sense and sound judgment to Concern himself with a matter of this kind, *Provided other Reasons did not weigh with him.*"<sup>22</sup> At any rate he told Chew, expressing the wish that he repeat the opinion to Dyer, agent of the Susquehannah Company, that there was no hope of Dyer's obtaining a charter for the company, and that, unless they knew the Indians were satisfied, the ministry would be absolutely opposed to the scheme.

. . . his Errant would be to no Purpose unless the Indians were Really willing for the Settlement, and *more* that the ministry would Expect to Receive an Acc<sup>o</sup> of their being willing from S<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Johnson, the Person they employed here in matters Relating to Indians—that if we Expected a Govern<sup>t</sup> and to obtain a Charter we should be disappointed—that our Claiming all the Lands to the West Seas was Idle and Ridiculous—that no Person could pretend to think it Consistant w<sup>th</sup> Common Sense to have a Govern<sup>t</sup> 60 miles wide & 3000 miles Long—and many things of the kind.<sup>23</sup>

When representatives of the Iroquois came to Hartford to lay their complaint before the assembly during its May session

<sup>20</sup> Chew to Ingersoll, June 8, 1763, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 281.

<sup>21</sup> " . . . tho' I am not immediately appointed by the Crown to the small Posts I enjoy I Receive them from Persons who will by no means encourage anyone who would be troublesome." Chew to Dyer, June 9, 1763, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, 283.

<sup>22</sup> Chew to Ingersoll, June 17, 1763, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 282.

<sup>23</sup> Chew to Ingersoll, Aug. 10, 1763, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 286.



in 1763, Fitch told them that the government had had nothing to do in the matter of buying their land or in sending people to settle upon it.<sup>24</sup> Dyer, angered by the Indians' denial of having sold the land to the company, and balked in his designs, accused Sir William Johnson, who had refused his bribe of a share in the profits of the company, of having sent non-representative Indians there in order to frustrate the plans of settlement.<sup>25</sup> His anger no doubt also included Fitch, for his speech to the Indians, a final act in his long course of opposition to the company. At all events when a fitting opportunity offered, the hostility Dyer showed Fitch was indicative of personal animus.<sup>26</sup>

Shortly after the coming of the Indians to Hartford, Dyer went to London, as agent for the company, in order to try to obtain a charter for the Wyoming lands. Chew, who "had a very great Respect for Col<sup>o</sup> Dyer and would go very great Lengths to Serve him,"<sup>27</sup> and who felt that only disappointment, if not disaster, awaited him if he continued to work in the interest of the company, did his best to persuade him to drop the whole matter:

I assure you I begin to Entertain a very Poor opinion of the Success of the Susquehannah Company, by what I can gather from Persons of the first Carracter the very mention of it is odious to the Crown & Ministry, & I believe those who Exert themselves most will not only gain the Displeasure of the great on the other side of the water, but of many in Power in the Coloneys . . . Since this Speech of the Indians I have had an Opportunity of seeing many Gentlemen, no ways Concerned, who all say it appears to them the Purchase if Ever made was a very unfair one, that if it had been made Ever so fairly & the Indians were sick of the Bargain the Crown would be in favour of them, that theres not Even a Prospect of its Ever being Granted by the Crown, and in short that one word from Sir W<sup>m</sup> Johnson, whose duty it is to set the

<sup>24</sup> See ch. ii, notes 50, 51 above.

<sup>25</sup> " . . . that the Deputies at Hartford from the Six Nations &c are in his opinion no more than Vagabond Mohawks, who S<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Johnson hired or sent to deliver that Speech in order to intimidatate & Prevent the Settlement." Chew to Ingersoll, July 27, 1763, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 285.

<sup>26</sup> See ch. iv, note 12 above.

<sup>27</sup> Chew to Ingersoll, June 27, 1763, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 282.



matter in the most Clear Light, will have more weight with the Kings Privy Council and Parliament than the oaths of ten thousand such unknown Witnesses as we have to the Deed obtained by Lydius [an Indian trader of questionable repute whom the Susquehannah Company had employed in the purchase from the Indians]. . . . I most sincerely interest myself in Every thing which Concerns you I wish from my heart you was fairly clear of the matter . . . Believe me, my Dear Sir, these Reasons are the Result of the Best advice I could get from those friends who I am in a great measure dependent upon, and my own serious Reflections.<sup>28</sup>

But Dyer was not to be turned from his purpose. When he reached London, however, Richard Jackson was able to persuade him that the time was not propitious for presenting his petition. While he waited his attention was taken up with a matter of great importance to all American colonists.

The Grenville ministry, formed in 1763, had begun the consideration of laying a direct tax upon the colonies. The Stamp Act, resulting from the policy adopted, had consequences of far reaching importance in the lives of some of the leaders in Connecticut. This colony was in agreement with the other colonies in its opposition to the passing of a stamp act. The assembly accordingly appointed a committee to consider the matter. Their report, in the form of a pamphlet of which Fitch was the reputed author, was sent, together with a "humble and earnest Address," to the Parliament of Great Britain.<sup>29</sup> When, notwithstanding the agitation throughout the colonies, the Stamp Act finally became law, the governors received orders to take oath that the act should be faithfully observed. Governor Fitch hesitated, for he knew that the colony stood opposed to the act. Disobedience, however, meant removal from office and a fine of £100; so, after waiting until two days before the last possible one, he called the council together in order to take oath.<sup>30</sup>

The presence of three members of the council was required for the administration of the oath. Four, only, remained while all the others, with Deputy Governor Pitkin, withdrew "rather

<sup>28</sup> Chew to Dyer, June 9, 1763, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 283.

<sup>29</sup> Bates, *Fitch Papers*, I, p. xiv.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

than witness the degradation."<sup>31</sup> Eliphalet Dyer, however, was not content with mere withdrawal, "I was ye only one," he wrote, "who made a public Declaration to Gov<sup>r</sup> & Council that it was an oath in my opinion Contrary to y<sup>e</sup> oath the Gov<sup>r</sup> & Council had before taken to Maintain ye right &c of Ye Colony."<sup>32</sup> Thus Dyer and Fitch found themselves on opposite sides on another political issue.

The taking of the oath was an act that the majority of the freemen in the colony felt they could not forgive. In consequence the governor failed of reëlection the following spring, 1766,<sup>33</sup> in spite of having published a pamphlet in vindication of his action. The councilors who had administered the oath to him were united with him in the popular disfavor and also failed of reëlection.<sup>34</sup> These four were: Ebenezer Silliman, John Chester, Benjamin Hall, and Jabez Hamlin. It was the greatest political upheaval the colony had ever experienced. The character of the Lower House also had been changed. The election of representatives six months before, on account of "the Confusions of later times," had resulted in the choice of new members for "about half the number in the lower house."<sup>35</sup> The resulting assembly was thus so united in its opposition to Great Britain that, without undergoing any further material changes, it was able to send to the Congress of September, 1774, delegates who had been officially chosen as representatives of Connecticut.

The Stamp Act caused the political death of another prominent citizen of Connecticut. Jared Ingersoll, former agent of the colony, had been appointed to the position of distributor of stamps. Like Fitch and the councilmen he had opposed the enactment of the tax, having spoken against it in London; but,

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<sup>31</sup> Samuel Wolcott, *Memorial of Henry Wolcott*, p. 58.

<sup>32</sup> Bates, *Fitch Papers*, I, p. xvi.

<sup>33</sup> Johnston, p. 287, makes the error of stating that Governor Fitch died in 1766.

<sup>34</sup> Bates, *Fitch Papers*, I, p. xvii.

<sup>35</sup> Ingersoll to Thomas Whately, Nov. 2, 1765, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 351.

when it became law, he stood ready to carry it out.<sup>36</sup> The people, however, forced him to resign the position and, not satisfied by his quiet submission, continued to show their rancor toward him until he was glad to escape to Philadelphia, in 1771, to enter upon the position of Judge of the Court of Vice Admiralty of the Middle Colonies, to which he had been appointed by the home government.

There were others who, fortunately for themselves, just avoided being implicated in the Stamp Act trouble. William Samuel Johnson wrote to Ingersoll, "If you propose to have a Subaltern in every Town, I shall be at your service for Stratford if it be agreeable."<sup>37</sup> Even Nathaniel Wales of Windham and Andrew Adams of Litchfield asked for appointments. The latter, however, upon reflection withdrew his request. They were both, later, among the original members of "the very efficient Council of Safety" that advised with Governor Trumbull during the Revolution.<sup>38</sup> They, with many others, were ready to follow the popular trend when it was plainly shown. Ingersoll and Fitch and his associates, however, remained conservative too long ever to regain the popular favor.

"Old party" was the name by which these conservatives came to be designated. There were no parties according to the modern meaning of the word; accordingly, when the term was used by either group in designating the other, it was a term of opprobrium. The grouping of radicals and conservatives, according to the attitude taken toward Great Britain, continued from this time on until the Revolution, or until the few who still remained conservative became designated as Tories. The letters of Benjamin Gale, "one of the most striking characters of his generation in Connecticut,"<sup>39</sup> furnish an interesting commentary on the politics of the time from the standpoint of

<sup>36</sup> In October, 1764, Ingersoll went to England on private business; while there he was appointed stamp collector and, accordingly, returned in July 1765.

<sup>37</sup> W. S. Johnson to Ingersoll, June 3, 1765, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 324.

<sup>38</sup> Salisbury, *Family Hist. of Griswolds*, etc., p. 55.

<sup>39</sup> Dexter, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 32.

a conservative. Those of Eliphalet Dyer give the other side, that of the victorious radical group, which was still gaining in favor and prestige.

Doctor Gale wrote in 1767 to Ezra Stiles, who still held a pastorate in Rhode Island,

We are so emerg'd in Politics of the Rhode Island kind of Parliamen-  
tering that I fear the peace & happiness of this Govt. is at an End . . . 40

Radical as Connecticut may have been considered, its own citizens thought it most conservative in comparison with Rhode Island. In June of the same year Doctor Gale wrote the following to William Samuel Johnson, then in London carrying on the Mason Case:

Inclosed I send you a list of the Votes of the Freemen by which you will see Coll Dyer has the fewest votes save one now in Council, and I am of ye Opinion is in a Good way to have Less—we discovered, in Counting small Rolls of Votes, Twisted up together, which Doubtless were given in for one vote, which contained Numbers—one such contained 20 Votes for Govr. Pitkin these things work strong—a Motion was made for a New list to regulate the Elections but it Failed—I think we are in a fine way, & riding Poste Haste into Rhode Island Method of Faction—Could the Freedom of our Elections be maintained our Privileges would be a great Blessing, but otherwise, Loss of Charter would be Greater . . . With regard to the State of our publick Affairs I doubt w<sup>r</sup> we shall suddenly have any great Changes, and Indeed when I cooly reflect upon it, I had rather get out of it by degrees, than to run into such Unstable Measures as in Rhode Island, where no Man of Honour Capacity or Worth, would think it worth while to Accept of Any place of truse in y<sup>e</sup> Colony. One Comfort is, our Present Govr is very old & as age is Honorable I wish he was, as old again as he now is.<sup>41</sup>

As the conservatives were dropped out of the council, each one was lamented by the Doctor. Again he sent his discouraging recital to Johnson:

. . . our New Ministry here in Connecticut, of which You are an Unworthy Member, priding themselves in doing Business well, & for the Glory of God, had got so astern in the Business of the Session last May, that during the Octobr Sessions they did not finish the Petitions & Memorials of Last May.

They dismissed the treasurer at his own request, having apparently made it unpleasant for him, and

<sup>40</sup> Gale to Stiles, April 17, 1767, Stiles, *Extracts* . . . p. 472.

<sup>41</sup> Gale to W. S. Johnson, June 10, 1767, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

appointed Mr. Lawrence, & when they can get rid of the Secretary, and one man on the other side of the Atlantic, [W. S. Johnson, himself] we shall have a Holy Senate and not one Honest Man Above Stairs.<sup>42</sup>

The following letter from Dyer to the same correspondent offers a suggestion as to the business that took the extra time of the "Holy Senate:"

. . . as to affairs in General in this Country the Several Colonies seem well United in their Measures to Evade every attempt to Enslave this Country, & flatter ourselves we shall Succeed therein in our little Colony the old party keeps up they seem not quite discouraged they seem determined to make some struggle at least every year to regain their seats but hitherto in vain you remain firm & the Colony in General seem well pleased with your Agency . . .<sup>43</sup>

In these letters the references to party divisions show the results of the Stamp Act. In the following letter Dyer shows that the "old party" and the opposers of the Susquehannah Company were identical:

. . . we have Petitioned our Assembly for a Grant of the Colony's right and Title to those lands the upper house Grant the lower house come near to a Tye but last may Negativd by a Majority of two then continued to October Sessions Tried again & Negativd by the lower house by a Majority of Six the principal opposition arise from the old party but however the Country in General seem to be more and more apprized of the Colony's right to those Western lands & the Assembly very unanimously voted and appointed a Comtee viz Gov. Trumbull and Mr. Wyllys to apply to you to procure in England at the several offices where they may be found Authenticated Copyes of the several Grants that Concern the Title of this Colony . . . You will doubtless before this hear of the Death of Gov. Pitkin he died the beginning of October last great Expectation was had with respect to the choice of Gov<sup>r</sup> at October Assembly the parties Exerted themselves to the Utmost it lay between Gov<sup>r</sup> Fitch & Trumbull Gov<sup>r</sup> Trumbull Carried it by about 15 votes which opened for a choice of Deputy Gov<sup>r</sup> Gov<sup>r</sup> Fitch was again set up by that party for D Gov<sup>r</sup> & several in opposition to him & as it was supposed the Votes against him would be scattered it was agreed by that party that whoever on the first Tryal had the most Votes they should all Unite in him at the next Tryal which brot in Mr. Griswold for Dep<sup>ty</sup> Gov<sup>r</sup>.<sup>44</sup>

The "old party" that called its adherents together at Middletown to determine some method of procedure to oust the members of the Susquehannah Company from their position in the council

<sup>42</sup> Gale to Johnson, June 30, 1769, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

<sup>43</sup> Dyer to Johnson, Aug. 8, 1769, *Johnson MSS.*, IV: No. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Dyer to Johnson, Nov. 10, 1769, *Johnson MSS.*, IV: No. 9.



was the same group that had lost favor through obedience to the decrees of Great Britain in regard to the Stamp Act. It was also the same group that, several years earlier, had been strong enough to hold its position in spite of the organized efforts of the New Lights against it.<sup>45</sup> Upon the first appearance of the Susquehannah Company Fitch had taken his stand against it. While the company was at the height of its first popularity throughout the colony, many from the conservative group had joined it. As the disapproval of Great Britain had become manifest, however, most of these either left the company or ceased all activity in it. Accordingly, when the affairs of the company became matters of political importance, most of the former Old Light group rallied to the support of the governor in his determined opposition to it. Fitch and his adherents, having publicly proclaimed themselves opponents of the Susquehannah Company and its claims, had thus added this position upon an economic issue to that which they had before taken upon a religious one, as a cause of their disfavor with the radical element in the colony. When, therefore, a third issue arose, upon which they again took a conservative stand, the accumulated animosity of the radical group at last gained force sufficient to defeat them in the election and drive them from the council.

The position held by this conservative group, other than in its official capacity, is shown in the report made by Armstrong, who had been sent to Connecticut by Governor Hamilton to carry his letters of remonstrance to Governor Wolcott and Deputy Governor Fitch and to learn what he could about the Susquehannah Company. He characterized the group as "the more knowing people" who despised "the Scheme as wild and prepos-

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<sup>45</sup> Doctor Gale briefly summarizes this development, from the viewpoint of the "old party," as follows:

"The manuscript I mentioned to you is an historical Acct. of the several Factions wh. have subsisted in this Colony, originating with the N. London Society—thence metamorphised into the Faction for paper Emissions on Loan, thence into N Light, into y<sup>e</sup> Susquehannah & Delaware Factions—into Orthodoxy—now into Stamp Duty—the Actors the same each change drawing in some New Members." Gale to Ingersoll, Jan. 13, 1765 [error for 1766], *New Haven Hist. Soc.*, IX, p. 372.



terous."<sup>46</sup> Even Benjamin Trumbull was obliged to admit, "I am quite sensible that there are gentlemen of great worth and ability, from whose opinion I am obliged to dissent, with regard to this popular question."<sup>47</sup> This group, whose members considered themselves as belonging to a higher class in society with their rank and position assured, had no desire to institute a change in the established order of things. Moreover, they enjoyed the favor of the home government. Letters<sup>48</sup> from Richard Jackson show what hopes of future consideration they could entertain. They received special consideration because of what they suffered at the hands of the people on account of the loyalty they had shown in the crisis occasioned by the passing of the Stamp Act. Their consistent loyalty to the home government deserved recognition.

Although only the few conspicuous leaders of the "old party" have been considered here, it is possible to show something concerning their following. It is evident, at least, that there was a distinct geographical division within the colony, for

<sup>46</sup> Report of John Armstrong to Hamilton, Hoyt, p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> B. Trumbull, *Connecticut Courant*, April 26, 1774.

<sup>48</sup> "I have indeed already proposed somewhat beneficial for Govr Fitch, & if he sh<sup>d</sup> not accept for you if it sh<sup>d</sup> take place; but I am not at liberty to disclose what this is, nor can I tell when it will take place, nor whether it will take place at all, nor even whether there will be room either for Mr Fitch or yourself; all that I can say now is that it will not be, I believe, disagreeable to anybody in America." Jackson to Ingersoll, Feb. 20, 1767, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, p. 403.

"It gives me great Concern to find myself still unable to gratify my Inclination to serve the good old gentleman Mr. Fitch . . . I forget in what manner I spoke of y<sup>e</sup> office of Justice of *Vandalia*; that is the Name of the new Province (if ever erected) but it would certainly have been offered to Mr Fitch I may say I had the promise of it for him . . . I have another thing in view for y<sup>e</sup> Govr there has been talk of a Commission of respectable Persons for y<sup>e</sup> settling judically (yet summarily) the Rights of all Persons claiming Lands on both sides of the River Connecticut in the Province of New York & New Hampshire under the Grants of those Provinces—I have proposed with approbation Govr Fitch as a proper person for y<sup>e</sup> Head of this Commission which would be to be executed,—no further than y<sup>e</sup> Country it respects at furthest, that only for a part of the year, & perhaps might admit of an adjournment to Hartford or Albany, a Multitude of other Business has stopped this proposal for y<sup>e</sup> present, as well as all steps towards settling of y<sup>e</sup> Government of *Vandalia*." Jackson to W. S. Johnson, April 5, 1774. *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

repeated statements were made concerning the "east" and "west" sides. Especially was this true after the episode connected with the Stamp Act. People from the eastern side of the colony had formed the mob that forced Ingersoll to resign his position of stamp distributor. After that his letters to England were waylaid and opened and their garbled contents published in such a way as to destroy his reputation. His friends tried to assist him in discovering who had done this. William Samuel Johnson wrote in this connection:

. . . the People to the Eastward have hence Imagin'd that you must have wrote in the manner they represented. They have in truth excellent Imaginations in that part of the Country, and it would not be very surprising to find a story of this kind exaggerated amongst them . . . <sup>49</sup>

Years later Ingersoll learned who had been most instrumental in spreading the false reports about him:

Col.Dyer tells me . . . it was Parson Trumbull who Communicated my Treasonable principles & Conduct to y<sup>e</sup> good people of the East. The Anonymous Letter was wrote from Norwich but the persons name is with held from me.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, it was the *Connecticut Gazette*, printed in New London, an eastern town, that withheld Ingersoll's letter from prompt publication, and that, though devoting quantities of space to the controversy of the spring of 1774, printed but one short article by the opposition.

When the "old party" was getting ready for the election in the year following that in which its members had been put out of the council, Doctor Gale was ready with his diagnosis of the situation:

After all our paper War, Squibs, Curses, Rhimes, &c I am not yet satisfied Gov<sup>r</sup>. Fitch will be chose, however he has a large Majority on y<sup>e</sup> West side C [onnecticut] River . . . <sup>51</sup>

After the election and the second defeat of the "old party" Gale wrote that the votes of the "Professors of the Church of

<sup>49</sup> W. S. Johnson to Ingersoll, Dec. 16, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 365.

<sup>50</sup> Ingersoll to Jona. Ingersoll, his son, Oct. 24, 1774, *New Haven Hist. Soc. Colls.*, IX, p. 449.

<sup>51</sup> Gale to Stiles, April 17, 1767, Stiles, *Extracts* . . . p. 492.

England" on the east side of the river were in general in opposition to Fitch.<sup>52</sup>

The division of the colony into east and west sides was brought out more strongly in articles published in the newspapers during the controversy in 1774. In a satire on the Middletown convention the author called the members of the "old party" the "Quilpiacks" and those "who inhabit the East" the "Pequots."

In Times of Yore, the Pequots obtained a complete Victory over the Quilpiacks, which proved the Occasion of spleen and ill Humour in the latter, that has continued to this Day.<sup>53</sup>

hannah Company the members of the "old party," the inhabitants of the western part of the colony:

"Philanthropus Redivivus" saw in the opposers of the Susque-

Our present freedom from the Stamp act under God, was owing very much to their conduct [members of Massachusetts assembly] and the vigorous intrepid exertions of *the wise men of the east* in our colony, and not to the mean, mercenary conduct of a number of courtiers, that appear'd ready and willing to resign all our natural rights and charter privileges, under the vain and groundless pretence of saving our charter, though truly for the sake of some petty post, money or honor, that comes from home. Upon examination you'll find, perhaps, the same men and their tools as willing to give away part of our colony, as they were all our rights and privileges then.<sup>54</sup>

A writer who signed himself "an old friend to Connecticut" objected to what the Susquehannah people said about the west side, but did not take exception to the fact that there was such a division:

The common cant of the friends to Susquehannah is that the people on the west side Connecticut river are fools, and madmen; 'tis strange that this people are become fools at once, the import of this is, that the company are desirous of judging for the whole, and are unwilling other people should have any power of voting or acting for themselves.<sup>55</sup>

Two thirds of the counties of Windham and New London, on the east side of the Connecticut River, comprised those lands that were held by disputed title. Moreover, it was in Windham

<sup>52</sup> Gale to W. S. Johnson, June 10, 1767, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).

<sup>53</sup> "A Pequot," *Connecticut Gazette*, April 1, 1774.

<sup>54</sup> "Philanthropus Redivivus," *Connecticut Courant*, April 5, 1774.

<sup>55</sup> *Connecticut Courant*, April 5, 1774.

County that the plan of buying the Wyoming lands from the Indians had originated. When the first memorial was presented, in 1753, by one hundred subscribers, these were nearly all inhabitants of Windham County; Farmington, in Litchfield County, was the only one of the five named towns outside of that county. When the company had grown in size and importance, its meetings were held in Hartford or New Haven where the assembly was sitting, if they took place when it was in session; otherwise the meetings were generally held at Windham. It appears, therefore, that in the affair of the Susquehannah Company there was a fairly clean-cut line in the colony between those on the east side of the river who favored the company and those on the west side who were opposed to it.

In the revolutionary movement the eastern half of the state was in advance of the western;<sup>56</sup> this was the logical continuation of the stand taken by both sides upon every preceding issue. The division, however, was maintained much more in the southern than in the northern part of the colony. On September 15, 1774, the delegates from towns in the counties of Hartford, New London, Windham and a part of Litchfield joined in adopting a non-consumption agreement in order to support any non-importation agreement that might be entered upon by the delegates at the Continental Congress.<sup>57</sup> When a false report of a skirmish at Cambridge was spread throughout the colony, it was in those counties that the people armed and made ready to march to the assistance of Boston. Ezra Stiles, eager for every piece of news concerning the patriots, gave a full report of it in his diary on November 17, 1774:

Col. Putnam's Letter of Saturday XI<sup>h</sup> A.M. as soon as it came to Norwich was printed off & circulated to the Towns every Way thor' Connecticut in Handbills . . . . Being issued on Saturday it had the Effect of putting the whole Colony of Connecticut into an Alarm & Motion on Lords day . . . . The Western Counties of New Haven & Fairfield did not arm, except the Rev<sup>d</sup> Todd of E. Guilford and his Congregation: as far as I can learn the most of the Towns in the rest of the Colony armed and marched or prepared to march . . . . It was estimated to me at Colchester &c that on this Occasion there were Twenty

<sup>56</sup> Bacon, p. 273.

<sup>57</sup> *Connecticut Courant*, Sept. 19, 1774.

Thousand Men in Arms in Connecticut & marching or equipt for march toward Boston . . . There are in Connecticut 192 Thousand souls White implying near fifty Thousand fencible men. The Counties of N. London, Windham, Hartford, Litchfield raised probably Two Thirds their number.<sup>58</sup>

The rank and file of the Susquehannah Company was drawn from the section of Connecticut that was earliest and most outspoken in its opposition to Great Britain. Moreover, the men whose names stand out prominently in the affairs of the company were also leaders in that movement of opposition. Eliphalet Dyer, whose persistence doubtless made possible the final ratification by the colony of its claim to the western lands, was one among the earliest avowed patriots. He was a delegate to the Stamp Act Congress of 1765; he, together with three other Susquehannah members, Nathaniel Wales, William Williams and Jedediah Elderkin, belonged to the council of safety; he was also, together with Roger Sherman, who had shown his active sympathy with the company in the article he wrote during the controversy, a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1774. Samuel Huntington and Oliver Wolcott were delegates to the Congress in 1775; Wolcott, Williams and Sherman, as delegates in 1776, signed the Declaration of Independence. Elderkin was a colonel, Wolcott and Samuel Parsons brigadier generals of the Connecticut militia. Jedediah Strong was a commissary of supplies for the Continental army. Ezra Stiles and Benjamin Trumbull were leading ministers on the patriotic side. Hezekiah Huntington died in 1773 but he had taken a prominent part in the early revolutionary movements. Jonathan Trumbull, as governor of Connecticut, was so staunch a supporter of Washington that the general called him "Brother Jonathan." The Susquehannah Company contained but one prominent member who was actively opposed to the Revolution. This was George Wyllys, for many years the secretary of the colony.

William Samuel Johnson, appointed agent of the company while in London and the advocate who did most for Connecticut at the Court of Trenton, the friend of Gale, Ingersoll.

<sup>58</sup> Stiles, *Literary Diary*, p. 484.

and Fitch, appears as an anomaly. By nature conservative, he was a man whose personality was strong enough to enable him to steer the hazardous course between the two extremes and still retain the confidence and respect of both parties. He did not want the colony to assert its claim to the western lands lest such overt opposition to the policy and commands of the home government might cause it to forfeit its charter;<sup>59</sup> he therefore voted against it.<sup>60</sup> When the war broke out he refused an office in the militia and retired to his home, where he lived quietly throughout the conflict.

The group of expansionists called the Susquehannah Company was determined upon a westward movement. When British officers in America showed their disapproval, the conservative group within the colony reëchoed that disapproval. When the government forbade a continuation of the matter, that group was obedient and successfully thwarted the whole affair, but when the Stamp Act episode occurred, the radical group had its opportunity; taking advantage of the popular disapproval of the conservatives, the radicals, practically synonymous with the Susquehannah Company, drove the conservatives from the council. Freed from their restraining influence in the council, the company was finally able to obtain the support of the assembly; and to lay official claim to the western lands. Just as the radical group was eager to rid itself of the immediate restraint of the conservatives within the colony, so too it was ready to throw off the whole burden of control by the home government in order that it might, unhindered, pursue its westward way.

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<sup>59</sup> See ch. iii, note 15 above.

<sup>60</sup> W. S. Johnson to Rich. Jackson, Nov. 5, 1773, *Johnson MSS.* (loose).



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